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SAVED

FROM THE

SEA!



BY
FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Cry from the Sea!

"SHUT up a minute, Bunter!"
"Oh, really, Wharton—"
"Quiet!"

Billy Bunter snorted.

He had been talking for not more than a quarter of an hour, and he saw no reason for shutting up.

Bunter was full of supper; and he was not yet ready for bed. So naturally he was talking. When a fellow was neither eating nor sleeping, what else was there for a fellow to do?

Darkness lay like a velvety cloak on the wide waters of the Indian Ocean.

Harry Wharton & Co., on board the yacht *Silver Star*, were homeward bound from China.

China, the land where they had had so many strange adventures, lay many a long hundred miles behind them now.

With her red and green lights gleaming ahead through the dark night, the yacht was crossing the vast watery expanse of the Indian Ocean, not to touch land again till Aden was reached.

The night was dark, but fine and warm, and the Greyfriars juniors were on deck taking their ease in deck-chairs, and enjoying—more or less—the conversation of William George Bunter. Bunter's conversation rather resembled the little brook in the poem—it went on for ever.

Harry Wharton's head was bent, as if in intent listening; and Bunter had been rather flattered by this unusual attention, till the captain of the Greyfriars' *Remove* suddenly requested him to shut up.

Wharton certainly was listening intently, but apparently to something other than Billy Bunter's dulcet tones.

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His chuma looked at him rather curiously.

He was listening to something, but what, was rather a mystery to the other juniors. They were so accustomed to the steady throb of the engines that it seemed hardly to break the silence. Mr. Green, the mate, was walking to and fro, his footsteps came faintly through the deep dusk. But Wharton could hardly have been listening to that. There was no other sound audible save the wash of the sea and an occasional squawk from a parrot Mr. Green had picked up at Singapore on the way home.

But Harry Wharton's face was set and tense.

"Look here——" recommenced Bunter.

Wharton made an impatient gesture. "Shut up, ass!"

He rose from his chair and stepped to the rail, and stood leaning on it, staring out over the dark sea, staring hard as if to penetrate the cloak of darkness that lay round the throbbing yacht, and straining his ears to listen.

"I say, you fellows——" Bunter was as difficult to shut up as a cheap pocket-knife.

"Cheese it!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Wharton turned from the rail.

"I heard something," he said. "I'm certain of it—it was a cry! There's something—or somebody—out there on the sea."

"Rot!" said Bunter.

"Quiet, you ass!" said Frank Nugent. "Listen!"

"Rubbish!"

Bunter had heard no sound from the sea, and he was intensely interested in his own conversation. He saw no reason whatever for shutting up.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh clapped a dusky hand over the fat junior's mouth.

"The shut-upfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed jawful Bunter," he said.

"Groogh!"

Bunter being reduced to silence, the Famous Five of the Greyfriars' *Remove* listened intently.

Faintly from the deeply shadowed sea came a sound. It might have been the cry of a sea bird, but to the ears of the juniors it seemed to have a human note.

"It's somebody!" whispered Johnny Bull.

"I'm sure of it," said Harry; and he hurried away towards Mr. Green. The mate evidently had heard nothing.

"But what the thump——" said Bob, staring across the dark waters. "We're some hundreds of miles from land—there can't be a boat——"

"Shipwreck, perhaps!" said Nugent.

"Hark!"

Again the cry came, more clearly than before. This time there could be no doubt of it—it was a human cry. The juniors felt a thrill at their hearts.

There were no lights to be seen, there was no ship on the dark ocean. The cry came from some shipwrecked man—either in a boat, or swimming in the black waters.

But the Greyfriars' juniors could see nothing. They strained their eyes in vain in the darkness of the sea.

"I say, you fellows." The dusky hand was withdrawn from Bunter's large mouth, so naturally the Owl of the *Remove* restarted after the interval. "I say, it was only a seagull or something or——"

"Fathhead!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Shut up, fathhead, and listen!" said Bob Cherry.

Mr. Green, evidently, had paid heed to Wharton. He had signalled to the engine-room, and the yacht slowed down.

Again came the cry through the night.

"It's ahead of us!" said Bob.

"And on the starboard side!" added Nugent.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Call Mr. Locke," they heard the mate say, and Harry Wharton ran quickly below.

Ferrers Locke was taking his watch below, and was sleeping in his cabin, but he awoke instantly at Wharton's light tap on the door.

—THIS TOP-NOTCH YARN OF SCHOOLBOY ADVENTURE.

"What is it?" His cool, clear voice came immediately.

Wharton opened the door.

"Mr. Green sent me to call you, sir! There's either a boat or a swimmer on the sea—calling for help."

"I will be on deck in a moment."

Ferrers Locke was almost at Wharton's heels as the junior returned to the deck of the Silver Star.

The course of the yacht had already been changed, and she was heading in the direction of the cry, so near as it could be ascertained.

Locke joined Mr. Green, who was staring into the glow of the lights ahead of the gliding yacht.

"It's a shipwrecked man, sir!" said the mate. "In a boat, I reckon—a swimmer wouldn't last long in these waters. Mr. Wharton heard him first—there it is again."

Louder and clearer came the cry. This time the Greyfriars fellows could hear that there were words, though they could not understand them. Whoever was calling, was calling in some foreign language unknown to their ears.

But they saw Ferrers Locke nod.

"A Dutchman!" he said.

"I reckon so, sir!" assented Mr. Green.

There was no doubt of the direction now, and the yacht glided on towards the sound of the calling voice.

The juniors watched intently to pick up the sight of the shipwrecked man as soon as he came within the radius of the yacht's lights. Even Billy Bunter was silent at last. All the Greyfriars juniors were on deck, except little Wun Lung, the Chinese, who had gone to bed early. Eagerly they watched for the sight of a boat or a swimmer. And there was a shout from Bob Cherry as the dim shape of a boat loomed up in the gloom.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is!"

A boat—a small dinghy—floated ahead of the Silver Star. Had not the cry of the shipwrecked man reached Wharton's ears, there was no doubt that the yacht would have passed the lone boat, at a distance, for the dinghy had not been directly in her original course. And the juniors could imagine the feelings of the wrecked man in the boat, when he had seen the lights of the yacht bearing down towards him, and realised that she would pass him unseen in the darkness. They could imagine how he had put all his strength into the desperate cry for help that he had sent across the shadowed sea.

"Thank goodness we've got him!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"The thankfulness is terrific."

The light fell clearly on the dinghy now. A man was standing up in the boat—a man of burly and muscular frame, dressed in dirty cotton shirt and shorts—a man with a heavy Dutch face, and sharp eyes that gleamed and scintillated in the light, under thick, bushy brows. He was waving wildly to the yacht, and shouting. The words were in Dutch, and the juniors understood nothing of them; but as if the shipwrecked man guessed that it was a British vessel bearing down on him, he suddenly changed into English.

"Help! Save me!"

The shout came clearly.

"Help! Haast u wat! Save me! Save me!"

Ferrers Locke called back, and the Silver Star ran down to the boat. The engines ceased to throb, and as the dinghy rocked alongside, Ferrers Locke leaped down lightly into it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Survivor of the Sundabund!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. lined the rail, staring down into the rocking boat. Locke, almost in a moment, made fast a line.

Save for the Dutchman who had shouted to the yacht, the boat had no other occupant—the man had been alone. Of provisions, food or water, the juniors could see nothing. And the haggard look on the face that glimmered in the light from the yacht, showed that the Dutchman had been through privations. The juniors remembered how the fierce southern sun had burned and blazed the previous day; and the man in the dinghy must have been exposed to its rays, unsheltered, thirsting. He did not look a pleasant customer; but their sympathy was deep. Even Billy Bunter gave him a compassionate blink through his big spectacles. Bunter could understand how awful it was to miss meals.

"You are alone, then?" asked Ferrers Locke, his eyes on the Dutchman in the boat.

"Ja, mynheer! As you see!" answered the castaway, staring at the Baker Street detective, as if surprised by the question.

The juniors stared also. It was obvious, now they were close at hand and could see into the boat in the light, that the Dutchman was alone.

"Where is the other one?" asked Locke.

"The—the other, mynheer?"

"Yes—where is the other?"

Thousands of miles to Greyfriars. Hundreds of thrills on the way. Join up with Harry Wharton & Co. on their eventful journey home from China!

"What the dickens—" murmured Bob Cherry, in amazement.

"There is no other," said the Dutchman. "I am alone here, sir! You will give me a passage on your ship? For two days I have hungered and thirsted—since the Sundabund went down—"

"I shall give you a passage on my yacht," said Locke. "How long have you been alone in the boat?"

The Dutchman did not reply for a moment.

Under his beetling brows, his keen eyes were fastened on the calm, clear-cut face of the detective. It seemed that he was uncertain how to answer.

Bob Cherry pressed Wharton's arm.

"There's been another man in the boat," he whispered. "Look, there's a hat lying in the bottom—and that Johnny has his tile on his head. Unless he got into the boat with two hats, there's been another man."

"Locke noticed that at once, of course," remarked Nugent.

"You bet!" chuckled Bob.

The Dutchman's eyes fell on the hat that lay in the bottom of the boat, and he started. Doubtless he had not observed it in the darkness, before the lights of the Silver Star shone into the dinghy.

"Ja, mynheer!" he said slowly.

"Yes, there were two of us in the boat—all that survived of the Sundabund! It was at sunset that Captain Durie went mad with thirst, and leaped into the sea. He had drunk sea-water, mynheer, and that, as you know, sends a man mad."

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"I know!" he assented.

"Mynheer, I am dying of thirst—I

am starving—it is two terrible days since the Sundabund went down in the Indian Ocean—"

"And there were no other survivors?" asked Locke.

"None—only Captain Durie, and myself, Jan Vanderpeck—I was mate of the schooner. Mynheer, I am thirsting—starving—"

"Enough, for the present!" said Locke, and the Dutchman was helped on board the Silver Star. That the man had gone through severe privations was evident; but they did not seem to have impaired his strength to any great extent. He accepted Locke's help in ascending the accommodation ladder; but he jumped quite actively to the deck.

"Rawson!"

The steward bustled forward.

"Take Mr. Vanderpeck to the spare state-room," said Ferrers Locke. "Get him at once all that he needs."

"Yes, sir!"

"What about the boat, sir?" asked Mr. Green, as the steward was taking the Dutchman away. "Not worth taking in tow?"

"Quite worth it, Mr. Green," answered the detective skipper of the Silver Star. "Keep it safe."

The Dutchman turned his head quickly.

"This way, sir!" said the steward.

But the Dutchman did not heed him. He stepped back quickly towards Ferrers Locke.

"Mynheer! Do not trouble yourself about the boat!" he exclaimed. "It is worthless—and you are many hundred miles from land. Let it be cast adrift."

Locke's eyes rested on him for a moment.

"Leave that matter in my

hands, Mr. Vanderpeck," he

answered. "Please go below with the steward. You need food and drink."

Vanderpeck hesitated for a second, then he followed Rawson, and disappeared below.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances of wonder. Why Ferrers Locke insisted on taking in tow an almost worthless old dinghy, especially after what the mate of the Sundabund had said, was a mystery to them.

Ferrers Locke, no doubt, had his reasons; but his face expressed nothing. He gave the departing Dutchman one strange, searching look, as the man followed Rawson below.

Then the detective went to the side again, Mr. Green's eyes following him in surprise.

"We're going on, sir?" asked the mate of the Silver Star, in wonder.

"Not yet," answered Ferrers Locke. "We are in no hurry, Green, and for the present, the yacht can lie to."

"Ah, ay, sir!" said Mr. Green, though he was evidently lost in astonishment, as, indeed, were the Greyfriars juniors.

Ferrers Locke descended into the dinghy again. Mr. Green and the Greyfriars fellows watched him, with increasing wonder.

The Baker Street detective, with an electric torch in his hand, proceeded to make a thorough examination of the boat.

"By gum!" the juniors heard Mr. Green murmur. "By gum! What is he looking for? What does he expect to find? What's the game, anyhow? By gum!"

Harry Wharton & Co. could not have answered those questions had Mr. Green addressed them to the juniors. They

were as nonplussed as the mate of the Silver Star.

Locke's interest in the boat was inexplicable. Yet it was obviously deep, for he searched the craft from stem to stern, and from stern to stern again, leaving hardly an inch of its interior surface unexamined.

Before he came back to the yacht, he looked to the line that held the boat, to make sure that it was secure. Then he came on deck again, his face very grave.

"Are we going on now, sir?" asked Mr. Green, in a tone of exaggerated patience. There was, as a matter of fact, no great hurry on the homeward voyage of the Silver Star; but Mr. Green, like all sailors, hated to waste time on a voyage. And he could see no reason whatever for this delay in the darkness of the Indian Ocean.

Ferrers Locke shook his head. "No; we shall lie to till morning," he answered. "In the meantime, let the siren be sounded, and keep it going at short intervals."

Mr. Green's eyes almost bulged from his head in his astonishment.

"Might—might I ask why, sir?" he gasped.

"Certainly," answered Locke. "I think it may possibly be the means of saving another life."

"Another life, sir?"

"Yes, Green," said the Baker Street detective calmly, "if only we can be in time."

"But the man was alone in the dinghy, sir—"

"When we found him, yea."

"I mean if the other man went over the side at sunset yesterday he's gone to Davy Jones' locker long ago."

"I think Mr. Vanderpeck may have been mistaken as to the time his companion in misfortune went over the side!" answered Ferrers Locke. "Hunger and thirst and exposure to the sun play strange tricks on a man's brain. If he was mistaken, the man he calls Captain Durie may be still floating or swimming in these dark waters—"

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry. "If that's possible—"

"I think it quite possible, Cherry!" said Ferrers Locke, glancing at him.

"But—but—" stuttered the mate of the Silver Star. "The man isn't mad—he must know—"

"Nevertheless, we must not lose a chance of saving a life, Mr. Green," said Ferrers Locke. "We must not neglect even a remote chance. The man may be still afloat—especially as he probably has an oar to cling to."

"An oar?" repeated Mr. Green.

"There is only one in the dinghy," said Locke, "and certainly there must have been two. But we shall see."

Mr. Green was too well-trained a mate to shrug his shoulders in the presence of his owner and skipper. But his look betrayed that he had to make an effort not to do so, and Ferrers Locke smiled faintly.

"It's for you to order, sir!" almost gasped the mate of the Silver Star.

"Quite so!" agreed Ferrers Locke.

The yacht was still. She lay to the wash of the waves of the Indian Ocean, and through the darkness went the screeching of the siren—a message of hope to any shipwrecked man who might have been floating within hearing of the raucous sound.

But if the screeching fell upon human ears, there came no cry in answer. Darkness and silence surrounded the yacht—silence broken only by the screech of the siren.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Asks for It!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
"I'm sleepy!"

Billy Bunter made that announcement as if he expected it to be of general interest.

Judging by its reception on the part of the Famous Five, it wasn't!

"What about it?" yawned Johnny Bull.

"Well," said Bunter. "I'm going to bed."

"Good!"

The Famous Five were still on deck though the hour was growing very late. Ferrers Locke's suggestion that some hapless castaway might be floating on the dark waters round the yacht banished the desire for sleep for the present. They watched the sea, and between blasts of the siren, listened for some sound in reply—in vain.

"I say, you fellows—" insisted Bunter.

"Well, go to bed, fathead," said Harry Wharton. "Nobody wants you to stay up, I suppose."

"Quite the contrary, in fact," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Buzz off to bed and shut up!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"How's a fellow to sleep with that fearful row going on?" demanded Bunter indignantly. "What are they keeping it up for, I'd like to know?"

"You heard what Mr. Locke said, ass."

"Well, Locke's a fathead," explained Bunter. "You heard that Dutchman say the other man went over the side of the boat yesterday. I suppose he knows, if anybody does. So we may as well get going and leave off kicking up this fearful row. A fellow gets used to the engines; but that rotten siren would keep anybody awake."

"Try to think it's a saxophone in a jazz band!" suggested Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass! Look here, I can't go to sleep in that awful din. You fellows go and tell Locke so."

"It isn't exactly musical," agreed Frank Nugent. "Not quite like the jolly old sirens that Ulysses listened to. But you'll drown it when you begin to snore, old fat bean."

"Beast!"

"Anyhow, it's going on all night," said Johnny Bull. "So you may as well shut up, Bunter."

"I'm sleepy!" hooted Bunter indignantly. "Look here, you fellows go and tell Locke it's all rot and ask him to ring off. It's no good my asking him—the man's hardly civil to me, as it is. You'd hardly think that I came out to China specially to protect you fellows, and that I'm bringing you safe home, from the way that fellow Locke speaks to me."

"Hardly!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, look here, you go and tell Locke it's all rot and that he's a footling ass, and—"

"Shurrup!" hissed Bob, as the tall figure of the Baker Street detective loomed behind Bunter.

"Shan't! If you fellows don't tell him, I'll jolly well go and tell him myself!" hooted Bunter. "I've stood a lot of rot from Locke—about as much as I'm going to stand. He doesn't seem to remember that he's merely a detective, and that I'm a public school man. These common people want keeping in their places, and I've a jolly

good mind to go to him this minute and say— Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter broke off with a wild yell as a finger and thumb that seemed made of steel closed on his fat ear.

"Owl! Leggo! Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it is time you went to bed, Bunter!" said Ferrers Locke tranquilly; and he led the Owl of the Remove towards the cabin stairs—still with that steel-like grip on his ear.

"Yow-ow-ow!" wailed Bunter.

"Good-night, Bunter."

"Owl! Beast!"

"What?"

"Yow-ow-ow! I—I mean, good-night, sir!"

And Bunter, his fat ear released at last, rolled below gasping. Ferrers Locke returned to the group of juniors.

"You boys had better turn in," he said. "There is only the barest chance that a man may be picked up, and you must not lose your night's rest. If anyone is to be found we are more likely to pick him up after sunrise."

"Very well, Mr. Locke," answered Wharton.

And the juniors went below.

They found Billy Bunter in the saloon, rubbing a crimson, fat ear. He blinked at them through his big spectacles with feelings almost too deep for words.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Cheese it, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry. "You asked for what you got; and if I'd been Locke, I'd have kicked you down the stairs into the bargain."

"I'd like to see anybody kick me!" hooted Bunter defiantly.

"Mean that?" asked Bob.

"Yes, rather, you beast!"

"Well, here goes, then."

"Yarooooh!" roared Bunter as Bob's foot established contact with his tight trousers. "Owl! Whoop! Leave off! Oh crikey!"

And Bunter fled for the stateroom, leaving the Famous Five chuckling. As Harry Wharton & Co. went along to their rooms, they noticed that the light was still burning in the stateroom assigned to the Dutch castaway. The door was half-open; and the man looked out at the sound of footsteps.

His face looked much less haggard and gaunt than when they had seen him in the dinghy. Plenty to eat and drink, and the assurance of safety had done him good. He was dressed in a suit of pyjamas supplied by the steward and had slippers on his feet. Late as the hour was, he did not seem to be thinking of turning into his bunk; though it might have been supposed that after his experience in the open boat, he would have felt the need of rest and sleep.

His eyes, sharp and piercing under his heavy, beetling brows, searched the juniors. As it seemed that he wanted to speak, they stopped politely. They could not feel that they liked the man; but they had a compassionate interest in the castaway who had been saved from the sea.

"The ship is stopping!" said Vanderpeck. "Is it not? We are not going on?"

"That is so," assented Harry.

"Waarom?" exclaimed Vanderpeck.

"Wha-a-t!"

"I mean, why? Why do we stop here? Has the captain so much time to waste that he leaves his ship to at night?"

Harry Wharton smiled.

"No; but Mr. Locke thinks it may

be possible to save the man who was in the boat with you," he explained.

The Dutchman started and stared at him hard.

"But he is mad, then," he snapped. "Have I not told him that Durie, the skipper of the Sundabund, went mad with drinking sea-water, and fell over the side at sunset? Many, many hours ago. He is dead—dead—the sharks of the Indian Ocean have devoured him long ago!"

The man's manner was passionately, almost savagely, earnest. The juniors stared at him in astonishment.

"But if there is a chance——" said Bob Cherry.

"There is no chance! It is nonsense! This Locke, your captain—he must be out of his senses!"

"You had better not tell him so," said Harry Wharton dryly. "I don't quite understand you, Mr. Vanderpeck. I suppose you are anxious for your skipper to be saved if there is a chance for him yet?"

The Dutchman drew a quick, hissing breath.

"Yes—oh, yes! Ja, mynheer! Van ganscher harte! But there is no chance—it is waste of time. This Captain Locke is delaying for nothing. Is it for that that the syren is screeching, keeping a man awake?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Durie will not hear," said the Dutchman sullenly. "But your captain, he is master of his own ship; he must waste his time if he please. But he waste time—there is no man to be found on the sea! Goeden nacht!" he added, and stepped back into his room and closed the door, hardly waiting for the juniors' answering good-night!

"A queer customer," remarked Bob, as the juniors went on their way. "One would almost think he wasn't anxious for the other Johnny to be saved."

Well, I suppose there isn't much chance of it," said Harry. "Ten to one we're wasting time. But Mr. Locke is right, to make sure."

"Yes, rather."

The juniors went to their rooms and turned in. Sleep did not come very easily; their thoughts were with the castaway, who, perhaps, was floating on the dark waters, perhaps hearing the blasts of the yacht's syren, unable to answer. And the din of the syren did not conduce to slumber.

But from Bunter's room there soon proceeded a gargantuan snore, which showed that the syren was not, as the fat junior had feared, keeping him awake. Bunter was safe in the arms of Morpheus, and signifying the same in the

"Help!" cried the Dutchman, standing up in the boat and waving wildly. "Save me!" Harry Wharton & Co. peered anxiously over the rail of the Silver Star.



Green was there, talking to his parrot. Ever since the Silver Star had steamed out of Singapore on the homeward voyage the mate had been trying to teach that parrot to talk.

Mr. Green had not a lot of leisure, but nearly all he had was spent on the education of Baldwin, the parrot. Why Mr. Green had named him Baldwin the juniors did not know.

Green was a first-class sailorman, but not deeply read in history, so he could scarcely have named him after the ancient Count of Flanders of that name. Possibly he had named him after a modern statesman, perhaps perceiving some resemblance between political oratory and the incessant cackle of the parrot. Anyhow, Baldwin was his name, and the green parrot would blink his red eyes when he was called by it. But he would not talk.

The Malay at Singapore who had sold him to Mr. Green for seven dollars had represented him as a parrot that needed only the slightest instruction to become a great conversationalist. But that Malay had taken advantage of the sailorman's innocence. Baldwin cackled and cackled and cackled, but talk he would not.

Patiently Mr. Green talked to him, and waited for his words to be repeated. But Baldwin would not even say "ship ahoy!" or "pipe of bassy." He would do nothing but cackle.

"Bother the bird!" said Mr. Green; and as the juniors came in he abandoned his task and went on deck.

Baldwin was allowed the freedom of the saloon. Generally he would sit perched, gazing with solemn eyes. He had hours of silence, and hours of cackling and screeching. Often the juniors joined in the game of trying to teach him to talk. It helped to kill

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Talking Parrot!

"SHIP ahoy!"
Cackle, cackle!
"Jolly sailor! All aboard!"
Cackle, cackle!

"Blow the bird! That pie-faced Malay did me out of seven dollars!" growled Mr. Green.

Cackle, cackle, cackle!
Harry Wharton & Co. smiled as they came into the saloon for breakfast. Mr.

time on the long voyage. But they had no more success than Mr. Green.

"Any news, Mr. Green?" asked Harry Wharton, as the mate was going up.

"No," answered Mr. Green.

"Nobody picked up in the night?"

"No."

Mr. Green grunted out that answer, and disappeared.

It was quite easy to see that Mr. Green's opinion was that of the Dutchman—that Ferrers Locke was wasting his time uselessly in hanging about that particular spot in the Indian Ocean looking for the other man who had been in the dinghy.

Locke, however, was evidently keeping to his idea, for the Silver Star was not under way. The yacht lay idle on the waves, like a painted ship on a painted ocean, as Bob Cherry remarked, quoting from the "Ancient Mariner."

"How's the jolly old castaway, Rawson?" Bob asked the steward.

"Right as rain, sir," answered Rawson. "He was on deck at dawn—and he's still there. He don't seem much the worse for what he's been through."

"I dare say he's anxious for the other man to be picked up, if possible," remarked Nugent.

"I desay, sir."

Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, was at breakfast with the Famous Five. He had gone to bed early the previous night and had not awakened when the dinghy was picked up, so what had happened in the night was news to him.

The chums of the Remove were almost finished breakfast when Billy Bunter rolled in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Did you sleep after all, Bunter?"

"Hardly a wink," grunted Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! Do you snore while you're awake?"

"The snorefulness of the esteemed Bunter was terrific," grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, you fellows! I say, I'm hungry. Steward! Blow that steward! Where's that beastly steward? Where—"

"Here, sir," said a voice at Bunter's elbow.

"Oh, here you are! Look here, where's my brekker?"

"Here, sir."

"Oh, all right!" Bunter grunted and sat down. "I say, you fellows, the yacht isn't moving. Are we still hanging about looking for that blinking man who was in that blinking boat?"

"Looks like it," said Harry.

"What awful rot!" said Bunter. "Locke's an ass, as I told you before. What's the good of hanging about here, like a whited sepulchre on a painted ocean, as Tennyson says."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," grunted Bunter. "If it wasn't Tennyson, it was Shakespeare, or somebody."

"Make it Coleridge," chuckled Bob, "and last time I heard it it was a painted ship on a painted ocean."

"Rot!" said Bunter. "You don't know much about poetry, Cherry. I'm rather a whale on that sort of thing. It's a whited sepulchre on a painted ocean—or a painted sepulchre on a whited ocean—I forget which. I say—"

Cackle, cackle, cackle!

Bunter stared round.

"Oh, that beastly parrot! Blow the thing! Always kicking up a row! That man Green was a silly ass to be done

over that parrot! He can't teach him to talk! I jolly well could!"

"Is there anything you can't do?" inquired Bob sarcastically.

"Well, I dare say there are a few things, though I can't remember 'em at the moment. I'll bet you I could make that parrot talk, and I would, too, if Green would give him to me. I'm not going to teach another man's bird to talk. I say, you fellows, where are you going?"

"On deck, old bean."

"You might stay with a fellow while he has his brekker. I want to talk to somebody."

"Bunter talks plenty too much!" remarked Wun Lung.

"Don't you be a cheeky heathen," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows—"

"Talk to the other parrot!" suggested Bob Cherry; and the juniors went up to the deck, leaving Bunter to feed alone.

The Owl of the Remove grunted discontentedly. He had turned out of bed late, but he did not like being left alone at brekker. The Famous Five, however, were disinclined to sit round watching Bunter while he fed. Besides, Bunter's breakfast was a lengthy operation. He was not satisfied with one; he packed away several, one after another.

Rawson was hovering round. Rawson wanted to get the saloon clear; but Billy Bunter was quite unconcerned about that. It was very seldom that William George Bunter was concerned about others.

"Finished, sir?" asked Rawson, at last.

"I'll have some more coffee," said Bunter, "and I think I could do with a cake."

Rawson grunted distinctly.

When Bunter was first on board the Silver Star, Rawson had been rather interested in his gastronomic performances, wondering where the fat junior put it all. But that entertainment had long since palled on Rawson.

Bunter scoffed coffee and cake contentedly. He was feeling better, after several breakfasts. He blinked thoughtfully at Baldwin, as he scoffed. There was a grin on Bunter's fat face.

Nobody on board the Silver Star had yet been able to make Baldwin talk. But Billy Bunter was convinced that he could do so. And, having finished his coffee and cake, Bunter cleared his throat with a fat little cough. Had the Greyfriars fellows been present they would recognise that fat little cough—always the preliminary to Bunter's ventriloquial efforts. It was what Bob called his "atmosphorica." If Billy Bunter could do nothing else, he could ventriloquise; and a ventriloquist could make a parrot talk, if nobody else could.

"Hallo, Polly! Pretty Polly!" said Bunter, blinking at the parrot.

Cackle! Cackle!

Rawson hovered.

"If you've finished, sir—"

"Oh, yes!" said Bunter. "Like to hear that parrot talk, Rawson?"

"He won't talk, sir."

"Bet you a dollar I make him talk," said Bunter.

Rawson coughed.

"Mr. Locke would object to my betting with the young gentlemen, sir," he answered. "Otherwise—"

"Oh, blow Mr. Locke!" said Bunter. "You needn't tell him, I suppose. Afraid of losing a dollar?"

Rawson, like most other members of the ship's company, had often desired to kick Bunter. Now that desire was

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strong upon him again. He could not very well kick Bunter, however; but the desire to take the fat junior down a peg made him stretch a point in the matter of betting with the young gentlemen. For he was quite convinced that Bunter could not make the parrot talk.

He laid a silver dollar on the table. "Very well, sir; just for this once," said Rawson.

Bunter grinned. "Now, Baldwin, you've got to talk," he said.

Cackle! Cackle! came from the parrot, as he blinked at Bunter with solemn red eyes.

Rawson grinned, too. "He won't talk, sir!" "He will," said Bunter. "I've got a lot of influence over birds and things—power of the eye, you know. I'll make him speak."

Rawson shrugged his shoulders. Bunter fixed his eyes, and his spectacles, on the parrot. Baldwin blinked back at him solemnly.

"Now, Baldwin! Say 'Steward!'" said Bunter.

"Steward!" came—or seemed to come—from the green parrot.

Rawson jumped. "My eye!" he ejaculated.

"What did I tell you?" grinned Bunter.

"Well, he ain't never spoke before!" said Rawson, staring at the parrot in amazement.

"Speak again, Baldwin!" said Bunter. "Tell the steward what you think of him!"

"He, he! Pio-face!" came from the blinking parrot. "Ugly mug! Red nose! Whose whisky have you been mopping up? He, he!"

Rawson fairly staggered. "Good 'eyings!" he ejaculated.

He stared blankly at the uncanny bird. Not only was the parrot talking at last but he seemed to have a mysterious knowledge of Rawson's purely private and personal affairs!

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"Well, this beats it!" gasped Rawson.

Cackle, cackle! came from the parrot. "Take your face away! It makes me ill! Let the whisky alone! It makes your nose red! He, he!"

"Oily smoke!" gasped the steward.

"What a face!" went on the parrot.

"Who's been treading on your features, steward? He, he!"

Rawson could only stare blankly. Bunter had taught the bird to speak, though certainly he had not taught him to speak politely.

Bunter picked up the dollar.

"I told you so!" he remarked; and with much satisfaction the Owl of the Remote slipped the dollar into his pocket and rolled on deck, leaving Rawson still staring blankly at Baldwin—who uttered not another word after the Greyfriars ventriloquist was gone.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Saved from the Sea!

"**W**E'RE moving!" remarked Bob Cherry.

The Silver Star was in motion at last.

Towing the dinghy astern, the yacht glided slowly through the water.

Obviously she was not resuming her run to distant Aden. Almost at a snail's pace the yacht circled round in the sea.

Ferrers Locke, with a pair of powerful binoculars to his eyes, was watching

the wide waters. Harry Wharton & Co. were watching, too, anxious, if they could, to pick up sight of the man whom the Baker Street detective supposed might be afloat in the vicinity of the yacht.

Vanderpeck, the Dutchman, was watching the sea still more eagerly. The previous night it had seemed to the juniors that Vanderpeck was indifferent to the fate of his companion in misfortune. But there was no indifference about him now. Keen anxiety could be traced in his hard and heavy face as he scanned the blue, heaving waters.

Only discipline prevented Mr. Green from betraying his impatience at this waste of time, as he considered it. The Dutchman had said plainly that it was at sunset the previous day that his companion had disappeared from the dinghy. That settled the matter for Mr. Green. It was absurd to suppose that a castaway could have remained afloat and alive so long in a sea infested with sharks.

But Ferrers Locke's word was law on board the Silver Star; he was both

SET TO WORK LADS, AND WIN A WALLET!

All you've got to do is to make up a Greyfriars limerick. If it's a good 'un you're sure of a wallet! Herewith, one of this week's winning efforts, sent in by Colin Campbell, of Madras College, Madras House East, St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland.

Billy Bunter was dining at

Kew

When he found a large mouse

In his stew.

Said the waiter: "Don't

shout

And don't wave it about,

Or the rest will be wanting

one, too!"

I've got heaps more wallets

in stock. Why not try to win

one now?

owner and skipper. And the Baker Street detective was determined—or, rather, in the mate's opinion, obstinate. His supposition that the Dutchman might have been mistaken about the time when his companion slipped into the sea seemed merely nonsense to Mr. Green. Vanderpeck had been through a hard time; but he clearly had all his wits about him.

Locke lowered the glasses at last.

He glanced at the mate with a faint smile.

"Take the glasses, Green!" he said.

"I think I have picked up something afloat, on the starboard bow."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Mr. Green took the glasses, and bent them in the direction indicated by the detective.

"Floating seaweed, sir!" he said.

"You think so?"

"I do."

"Well, we cannot make too sure in such a matter," said Locke. "Let us run down that floating seaweed, Green, and get a closer view of it."

The yacht's direction changed, and the engines throbbed. The Dutchman, gripping the rail with a grip so hard that his knuckles showed white, stared across the curling blue waters.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched eagerly.

Something—a tiny floating object—came into view at last, scarcely perceptible on the heaving ocean.

"That's it!" breathed Frank Nugent.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter joined the Famous Five. "What are you staring at? That bit of drift-wood?"

"Fathead! It's a man!" exclaimed Bob.

"Rot!" said Bunter.

Harry Wharton glanced at the mate. An extraordinary change had come over Mr. Green's face. He looked excessively sheepish.

"You're right, sir!" He lowered the glasses. "It's a man—hanging on to a broken spar, or something."

"An oar, I think," said Locke.

"Yes, that's it! It must be the man that went over the side from the dinghy."

"Little doubt of that."

"By gum! If he went over at sunset yesterday I'd never have believed that he could keep alive till now!" muttered the mate.

"I think he went over much later than sunset," said Locke tranquilly. "I think it was not long before we sighted the dinghy."

"I don't see why," said Mr. Green.

"I have my reasons."

The floating man was clearly visible now to the naked eye, as the yacht rushed down swiftly towards him. All eyes were fixed on him.

He made no sign to the approaching yacht, uttered no cry. He floated on the gently heaving water like a log, supported by the spar to which he held. It seemed to the observers on the yacht that he must be unconscious; yet he kept to the spar, upon which his head appeared to rest. As they drew nearer it could be seen that he was tied to the spar—strips torn from his clothing, knotted together to make a rope, fastened him to his sole support, and kept him afloat.

"Poor chap!" breathed Bob.

"I—I say, you fellows, it—it's really a man!" ejaculated Billy Bunter.

"Rather lucky we stopped, after all,"

"Yes, rather."

"The luckfulness is terrific."

Within a cable's length of the floating, senseless figure in the sea the yacht's boat dropped. Ferrers Locke entered it, and the boat's crew pulled swiftly to the castaway.

From the yacht Harry Wharton & Co. watched Locke free him from the floating spar, and lift him into the boat.

The man was evidently unconscious. He lay inert in the strong arms of the Baker Street detective as he was lifted in.

"I hope he's still alive!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"Ach!"

It was a guttural exclamation from the Dutchman, who was watching the rescue with starting eyes.

The juniors glanced at him.

Vanderpeck's grip on the rail was almost convulsive. Whatever emotion it was that stirred him, it was evidently powerful. His hard face was almost devoid of colour as he stared at the boat pulling swiftly back to the Silver Star.

Willing hands helped the rescued man on deck. He was insensible but still living. Vanderpeck came forward, the sweat thick on his brow.

"He lives!" he breathed.

"He lives!" answered Ferrers Locke.

with a searching look at the Dutchman's tormented face.

"Ach! But he is very far gone!" muttered Vanderpeck.

"He is far gone—but I think we shall save him!" said Locke. "This is the man who was with you in the dinghy?"

Vanderpeck hesitated a moment before he answered.

"Ja, mynheer!"

"The skipper of the Sundabund?"

"Ja, ja!" muttered the Dutchman.

"He has had a knock, sir!" said Green, pointing to a bruised cut on the forehead of the insensible man. "How the dickens did he get that knock?"

"He knock his head, I think, falling out of the boat, sir!" muttered Vanderpeck. "He was mad from drinking the sea-water."

"Possibly!" said Ferrers Locke.

The insensible man was carried below. The yacht's boat was swung up again, and the Silver Star at last resumed her interrupted run to distant Aden.

Vanderpeck touched the arm of the Baker Street detective.

"He is my shipmate, mynheer," he said huskily. "You will let him be put in my cabin! I will care for him—"

"He will be placed in my own cabin!" said Locke. "Fortunately I have some surgical skill, and he needs it all."

Durie was carried into Ferrers Locke's cabin, and placed in the detective's own berth. There he was left to Locke's care. The rust left the cabin, but Vanderpeck lingered behind. That the Dutchman was anxious was clear, whether or not his anxiety was for the man who had been his shipmate on the Sundabund.

Locke glanced round at him.

"Leave the cabin, please!" he said.

"But, mynheer—"

"Leave the cabin!"

Locke's voice was authoritative, and there was nothing for the Dutchman to do but to obey. Slowly and reluctantly he left the cabin, and the door was closed on the detective and the castaway.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung is Suspicious!

"A weg, Chink!"

The Dutchman, coming on deck, shoved roughly against little Wun Lung, and sent the Chinese junior staggering.

Wun Lung brought up against Harry Wharton. Without a word of apology Vanderpeck tramped on.

Wharton's eyes flashed.

To the Dutchman Wun Lung was merely a "Chink," a native of the Orient to whom he fancied that he could be as insolent as he chose. That was not Harry Wharton's idea at all.

He stopped quickly in the Dutchman's way.

"You had better mend your manners, Mr. Vanderpeck!" he exclaimed. "You are not allowed to shove or abuse passengers on this yacht."

Vanderpeck glared at him.

It was evident that the Dutchman was in a savage and bitter temper, though the cause of it was not clear. Whatever the cause, Wharton's idea was that he had to keep it to himself.

"A passengor!" jeered Vanderpeck. "That Chink a passenger! Ach! Does your Mynheer Locke give passage to Chinks?"

"Wun Lung is a passenger, and he belongs to our school at home," said Harry. "But if he were a stewards' boy, you would still have to treat him civilly, Mr. Vanderpeck. You are not

on a Dutch East India island now, where you can bully natives as much as you like."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"You ill-mannered brute!" exclaimed Frank Nugent indignantly.

Vanderpeck glared at the juniors. His look showed that he would have been glad to rush at them, hitting out right and left.

Had he yielded to that impulse the Famous Five would not have been sorry. They were quite prepared to mop up the deck of the Silver Star with Vanderpeck, big and muscular as he was.

But the Dutchman controlled himself. He was accustomed to handling a native crew on the schooner that had gone down, using feet and fists indiscriminately in dealing with them. But he realized that he could not use either fists or feet in dealing with the school-boy passengers on the yacht.

He grunted something in guttural Dutch, and swung away.

"Pig!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The pigfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "The punchfulness of his esteemed and ludicrous nose would be the proper caper."

"He will get it punched if he doesn't behave himself!" said Wharton, frowning. "Did the brute hurt you, Wun Lung?"

The Chinese junior grinned cheerily.

"No hurt," he said. "Allee light! He no likee Chinese, that Dussman. Me no likee that Dussman plenty too much, either. He plenty bad egg."

The little Chinese's slanting eyes were following the Dutchman curiously. Vanderpeck took no further heed of him. To him, Wun Lung was only a Chink, like any other Chink. But Harry Wharton & Co., to their surprise, saw that there was recognition in Wun Lung's look at the survivor of the Sundabund.

"You've seen that sportsman before, kid?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Me tinkee."

"My hat! Where have you seen him?" asked Nugent.

"Me tinkee see that fellee along China, before me come along Gley-Siah, long ago," said Wun Lung. "He plenty bad toad. He no savvy this Chinese, but me savvy that Dussman plenty too muchee."

The little Chinese said no more; but the juniors noticed that his eyes turned frequently on the sullen-faced Dutchman.

Whatever it was Wun Lung knew of Vanderpeck, they could guess that it was not to the Dutchman's credit.

Wun Lung had missed the scene the night before, and this was the first time he had observed the Dutchman. As the juniors sat in the deckchairs under the awning, waiting for Ferrers Locke to come on deck, the little Chinese asked questions, and they gave him a full account of the finding of the dinghy with Vanderpeck in it.

Wun Lung listened with keen attention.

"Fellers Locke plenty clevee!" he remarked.

"That's no news," said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "But what have you got in your noddle now, kid?"

Wun Lung smiled.

"Me tinkee Fellers Locke tinkee foul play along that dinghy!" he answered.

Wharton started.

"Foul play?" he repeated.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, and the juniors looked at one another. It was a new idea to them.

"Blessed if I see it," said Johnny

Bull. "Why should one castaway in a boat want to hurt the other?"

"Me no savvy! That Dussman plenty bad egg," said Wun Lung. "Me no trust that Dussman one copper cash! Me tinkee Fellers Locke tinkee foul play along the dinghy. That why he no believe what Dussman say; that why he stop along sea, looker fol othei man. What you tinkee?"

The juniors were silent.

They knew the statement that the Dutchman had made, and which had been duly entered in the log of the Silver Star. According to him, the schooner Sundabund, a trader of the islands, had struck an unknown reef in the night, and gone down in the Indian Ocean. The native crew of Malays and Kanakas and Chinks had panicked, seized the larger boat, and fled, whether surviving or not. Vanderpeck had no knowledge. He and the skipper had escaped in the dinghy, and had been without food and water for two days. At sunset on the second day Captain Durie, mad with thirst, had drunk seawater, lost his senses, and tumbled out of the dinghy, and Vanderpeck had seen no more of him.

That was the gist of the Dutchman's statement, and the juniors saw nothing to doubt in it.

Yet now that the acute Chinese junior made the suggestion, they could see that it was probable that Ferrers Locke doubted.

Certainly he had not trusted to Vanderpeck's information as to the time when Durie had gone over from the boat. Had he believed it, it was not likely that he would have lingered on the spot in the hope of picking up Captain Durie.

"I wonder!" said Bob at last. "Very likely Ferrers Locke saw something in the dinghy that we didn't notice. The jolly old Dutchman never knew that he was going to fall in with the keenest detective in the wide world."

"Well, we've got the other man now," said Nugent. "There's no doubt that he had a bad knock on the head."

"That's certain," said Wharton thoughtfully.

"He will tell us what happened as soon as he comes to," said Johnny Bull; "and if there was foul play we've got that Dutchman safe."

"Perhaps that's what's worrying the fellow," grinned Bob Cherry. "He seems to be in a frightful temper."

Ferrers Locke came on deck at last. The Dutchman, who had been staring sullenly at the sea, drew near to hear him as he spoke to the juniors.

"Has the man come to, sir?" asked Harry.

Locke shook his head.

"No. He has suffered extremely, and he is still unconscious. The blow on the head was severe, and he had a long immersion in the sea. The poor fellow lost consciousness in the water; but he had his wits about him, evidently, when he was first in the sea, for he tied himself to the ear to keep afloat. Had we not picked him up he could scarcely have survived many hours longer; but now I have every hope of saving him."

"He will live?" said Bob.

"I think so."

"And when he comes to—" Bob broke off and glanced at the Dutchman's face. The sweat was trickling down it.

"He has not spoken yet, mynheer!" asked Vanderpeck, and his rough voice had a peculiar quiver in it.

"Not yet," answered Locke.

"But you think—how long—?"

Vanderpeck's eyes were anxiously on the Baker Street detective's face.

"That I cannot say, but I do not expect him to recover consciousness to-day," said Locke. "To-morrow, no doubt."

Vanderpeck drew a deep breath.

"He is my shipmate," he said. "For many years I have sailed and traded among the islands with Captain Durie. You will let me take care of my shipmate and watch by him."

Locke's look was indefinable as it dwelt on the Dutchman's eager face. He shook his head.

"I hardly think you would make a good nurse, Mr. Vanderpeck," he said. "Your skipper is in good hands, and he will not be left alone."

"But he is my shipmate, mynheer, and I wish—"

"You must leave it to me to decide, Mr. Vanderpeck."

Ferrers Locke turned away with that, the Dutchman's eyes following him loweringly.

Vanderpeck lounged away; and Wun Lung grinned at the juniors, and winked one slanting eye.

"Dussman wantee muchas watchee sick man," he remarked. "No wantee sick man wakee talkoe, mo tinkoe."

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, startled. "You surely don't think—" He broke off. The thought seemed too terrible to put into words.

Wun Lung shrugged his shoulders.

"Me tinkoe he no wantee sick man talkoe!" he said. "Me tinkoe he plenty glad sponsee sick man no talker altogether any more. Fellers Locke savvy plenty; he no lettee Dussman put pillow over facee belong sick man."

The juniors shuddered. The suspicion seemed to them too fearful to be entertained for a moment. Yet they could not help thinking that some such suspicion must be in the mind of Ferrers Locke, for why otherwise should he refuse a sailorman leave to watch by his sick shipmate? And they wondered what tragedy might have been happening in the drifting dinghy when in the dark night the lights of the Silver Star came to the eyes of the castaways on the lonely waters of the Indian Ocean.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Parrot!

"**D**RAT the bird!" said Mr. Green. Cackle, cackle! The Greyfriars fellows smiled.

In the hot afternoon Mr. Green had his parrot on deck, and was once more endeavouring to teach him to talk.

The mate of the Silver Star had almost given up hope of success, and almost made up his mind that that seven dollars at Singapore was a dead loss, when he received from the steward the surprising information that Baldwin had talked that morning.

It was delightful news to Mr. Green, and it greatly encouraged him.

But if Baldwin had talked once he seemed disinclined to talk again. In vain Mr. Green gave him lumps of sugar and talked to him in persuasive tones. The parrot refused to acknowledge a single remark, except by a most unmusical cackle. Of cackle he had an unlimited supply, but of words none.

"Rather the bird!" said Mr. Green. "Tain't as if he hasn't talked at all. He's talked once, and the steward heard him. Why can't he talk again? That's what I want to know."

Billy Bunter grinned.

"Like me to teach him?" he asked.

Mr. Green grunted. He had the lowest possible opinion of Bunter and all his works. Yet he had to admit that, according to Rawson, it was Bunter who had induced the parrot to talk on the solitary occasion when Baldwin had given voice.

"Ay, ay! See what you can do, then," he said.

"I'd make him talk fast enough if he was mine," said Bunter. "Look here, Mr. Green, he's no use to you. You give him to me, and I'll make him talk."

"I gave seven dollars for that parrot," grunted Mr. Green. "That Malay at Singapore said he was easy to teach."

"That Malay must have been

knew that Billy Bunter was a ventriloquist.

Bunter remained on deck, heedless of tea.

Mr. Green shook a stubby forefinger at the parrot, who, perched on the cabin skylight, blinked back at him with solemn red eyes. Baldwin was quite a tame parrot, and a good-tempered bird. His only drawback was that he wouldn't talk, and that all his owner's efforts to induce him to do so were in vain.

"Talk, you brute!" growled Mr. Green. "Talk, you bally sea-lawyer! I've a thumping good mind to wring your bally neck, if you don't talk!"

"Leave him to me," said Bunter. "You'll never make him talk in a month of Sundays. I've got a lot of power over birds and animals—the power of



"Tell the steward what you think of him, Baldwin," said Bunter. "He, he! Pifface!" came—or seemed to come—from the parrot. "Ugly mug! Red nose! Whose whisky have you been mopping up? He, he!"

descended from Ananias, or George Washington," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Well, look here, I'll buy him from you, and pay up when we reach England," suggested Bunter. "I'm rather short of funds now, owing to being with a lot of ungrateful fellows who can't trust a friend with a loan; but I'm expecting some postal orders when we get home—"

Grunt from Mr. Green. He did not know so much about Bunter's celebrated postal orders as the Greyfriars fellows knew, but he had learned a good deal about Bunter himself on the Silver Star. He appeared disinclined to trust to the fat junior's promise of future payment.

"I'd like that parrot," said Bunter. "I could sell him at a good figure, at home, after teaching him to talk."

Mr. Green grunted again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's tea!" said Bob Cherry, and the Famous Five and Wun Lung went below.

For once, Billy Bunter did not seem to be in a hurry for a meal. He was, in fact, rather glad to see the other fellows clear off. If that parrot was going to talk, it was better for him not to do so in the presence of fellows who

the eye, you know. I just fix my eyes on them—"

"All four?" asked Mr. Green sarcastically.

Bunter snorted. This was cheek from a mate, and Bunter very nearly told him so. But not quite. There was no telling what Mr. Green might have done, had Bunter told him what he thought of him.

"Talk, you brute!" snapped Mr. Green. "Talk, you swab! Talk, you red-eyed lubber! Yah!"

Baldwin remained unmoved.

"That swab Rawson was dreaming!" growled Mr. Green. "The brute never talked at all! He can't talk!"

"I'll make him talk, if you'll give him to me!" said Bunter.

"You!" said Mr. Green, whose temper had suffered from Baldwin. "You! Why, you can't talk sense yourself!"

"Look here!" hooted Bunter.

"Well, I'll tell you what!" said the exasperated Mr. Green. "You try your luck, and if you make him talk I'll give him to you, and if you don't, I'll kick you down the hatchway."

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"Done!" said Bunter at once.

Mr. Green looked at him darkly.

"Mind, I mean it!" he said.

"So do I!" grinned Bunter.

"I'm a man of my word!" said Mr. Green. "Make him talk, and he's yours. But if he don't talk, you get my boot, hard!"

"It's a go!" said Bunter.

"Well, heave ahead, then!" said Mr. Green, and he swung back his foot a little, as if in preparation for fulfilling the bargain.

Bunter gave a fat little cough.

"Talk away, Baldwin!" he said. "Tell Mr. Green what you think of his face."

"Is it a face?" came from the parrot. Mr. Green almost fell on the deck.

"Holy smoko! He's talking!" he gasped. He stared blankly at the remarkable bird that had so suddenly become endowed with the power of speech.

"I told you I'd make him talk," said Bunter. "Go on, Baldwin!"

"Oh, give us a rest!" came from the solemn-eyed parrot. "I'm fed-up with that man Green. He's a silly ass!"

"He, he, he!" contributed Bunter.

Mr. Green staggered away a few paces, his eyes fixed on the parrot in something like horror.

"My word!" he gasped. "My word!"

Several of the yacht's crew drew near, staring on in amazement. Most of them had heard talking parrots before; but they had never heard a parrot talking like this.

Now that Baldwin had begun to talk, he went on with it.

"Call yourself a sailor?" he said. "How many ships have you piled up in your time? You ought to be mate of a Thames barge! That's your mark, Green."

"Great tornadoes!" gasped Mr. Green.

"Take your face away!" said Baldwin. "It worries me! Is it a face, or a figure-head off a wreck?"

There was a chuckle from the seamen, and Mr. Green glared round at them. They faded out of the picture instantly.

"Well, my word!" said Mr. Green, staring at the parrot again. "The brute can talk if he likes! It's uncanny. I've heard hundreds of talking parrots, but I never heard one talk like that before. I'd never have believed it!"

"Oh, you're a silly owl!" came from Baldwin. "You're no sailor! You on a steam-yacht! You ought to be before the mast on a wind-jammer! Yah!"

Mr. Green crimsoned with wrath. Had a human being addressed that deadly insult to him, Mr. Green would have replied with his knuckles, had the speaker been his owner. But he could not very well punch a parrot. He had wanted Baldwin to talk. Baldwin was talking now, with a vengeance. Mr. Green glared at the unconscious parrot in mingled wrath and amazement.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"That's my parrot now!" he remarked.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Green.

"A bargain's a bargain!" said Bunter. "You said I could have him if I made him talk! Well, I've made him talk, haven't I?"

Mr. Green could not deny it.

"He's yours!" he gasped. "Take him away! You've made him talk; but if he talks to me like that any more, I'll wring his bally neck. Take him away!"

Billy Bunter picked up the parrot

and lodged him on a fat shoulder. The parrot, who had often sat on Mr. Green's shoulder, seemed contented there. The fat junior rolled below with him, and Mr. Green shook a fist after the exasperating bird as he went.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you doing with Green's parrot?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Bunter rolled into the saloon.

"My parrot!" answered Bunter calmly.

"My hat! Has Green given him to you?"

"Yes; I made him talk."

"Gammon!"

"You can ask Green!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Well, make him talk again, and let us hear him!" said Bob suspiciously.

Bunter shook his head.

"He's not used to it yet," he explained. "I don't want to tire him. I'm always considerate, as you know. I hope you fellows haven't scoffed all the cake."

And Bunter sat down to tea. He was late for a meal, for once in his fat career; but, in the circumstances, Bunter considered that it was worth it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

At Midnight!

FERRERS LOCKE lifted his head. A low moan came from the man who lay in the bunk in the cabin of the detective-skipper of the Silver Star.

It was the first sign of returning consciousness.

Locke was stretched on the settee in the cabin. He had given up his berth to the sick man, and he took his watch below on the settee. Eight bells had lately struck. It was past midnight.

In their state-rooms, Harry Wharton & Co. were sound asleep. Mr. Green was taking his watch on deck. Under the glimmering stars the yacht throbbed her way across the shadowed waters of the Indian Ocean.

Ferrers Locke was resting, but he was not sleeping. Ever since the sick man had been placed in the berth he had never been left alone. During the day, various persons had taken turns to watch by him, though Locke had refused to allow Vanderpeck to take a turn.

As the low, faint moan came, Ferrers Locke listened, and then stepped from the settee.

The electric light was burning in the cabin, and the face of the man in the berth showed white in it.

His eyes were open now, staring up wildly at the detective. But there was no consciousness in them. The man had awakened from his long lethargy, but not in his senses.

His white lips moved, and Locke bent to catch the words.

"The belt!"

The words came faintly but distinctly. The feeble hand of the sick man groped, as if in search of the article he named.

"The belt! The money-belt! Hands off! Ah!"

The eyes closed once more. Locke bent over the man. He was unconscious again; but his breathing was regular, and there was a faint flush of colour in the white face.

Ferrers Locke returned to the settee, and stretched himself upon it again. There was a thoughtful frown on his brow. Those faint words, uttered unconsciously by the sick man, had given him a clue.

He lay silent, his head resting on a cushion, thinking. There was a faint

sound at the door, and it opened softly. For a second a grim smile crossed the face of Ferrers Locke. Then his face became expressionless, and he closed his eyes, as if in slumber. Only the merest slit of one eye remained open. Ferrers Locke appeared to be sleeping, but he was watching.

In the doorway stood the figure of Vanderpeck.

The Dutchman stood there, motionless, quiet. His sharp eyes, under the beetling brows, searched the room. They rested on Ferrers Locke, and he waited a full minute, watching and listening.

Then, softly, he stepped farther in, and closed the door.

Again he stopped and listened. But from the Baker Street detective there came no sound or movement. To all appearance he was sunk in a deep slumber.

A grin flickered over the face of the Dutchman.

Silently he stepped towards the berth, and stood looking down on the man who had been his skipper and shipmate.

He looked round over his shoulder at the settee; Ferrers Locke had not stirred. Vanderpeck drew closer to the berth, and his hand hovered over the sick man. A few moments more and it would have been pressed over the mouth of the unconscious man, shutting off the feeble breath.

"Stop!"

It was a quiet, almost whispering voice; but it startled the Dutchman like a clap of thunder.

He uttered a gasping exclamation, and spun round.

Ferrers Locke—with no sign of slumber about him now—was sitting up on the settee; and an automatic in his hand was bearing directly on the Dutchman. Over the levelled barrel his eyes gleamed.

"Stand away from the berth!"

"Ach!" gasped Vanderpeck.

He obeyed the order at once. The levelled revolver, and the cool, clear eyes behind it, enforced obedience.

He moved towards the door, his burning eyes on the Baker Street detective, his muscular hands clenched.

"Stop there!" said Locke.

Vanderpeck stopped.

"What do you want here?"

The Dutchman breathed hard.

"I came to—to look at him. I was anxious—he is my shipmate—I wished to see—"

"And that is all?"

"That is all!"

Locke smiled contemptuously.

"I have been expecting this," he said. "Stand where you are, Jan Vanderpeck; lift a hand, and I will shoot you down like a dog!"

"Mynheer—" stammered the Dutchman.

"You came here, to make sure that Captain Durie would never speak, to tell what happened in the dinghy," said Locke, in a low, level voice. "You have been watching for an opportunity all day, and I have taken care that you found none. Now you have taken the risk, because you dared not let him live till to-morrow, when he will recover his senses and speak. You scoundrel, I have known your game all along!"

The Dutchman did not speak. The hate and rage that burned in his eyes told of his feelings; but no word came from his set lips.

"I suspected you from the first," went on the Baker Street detective, in the same low, level tone. "I knew there

(Continued on page 12.)

"Half-Time" Gossip!



The greatest authority on football—Who is? "Old Matt!" He'll solve all your soccer problems for you, if you'll let him!

ONE of the reasons why so many questions crop up in regard to the game of football is because the rules of the game, as given officially, do not always mean what they say. Take as a typical example a point which is raised this week by a young player of a junior side in Bristol. He has been reading through the rules and regulations—a course which I commend to all young players—and has stumbled across this phrase, "No player may leave the field of play during the course of a match, or return to it, without the permission of the referee."

This reader points out that this is a rule which is broken dozens of times in practically every match. For example, every time a player goes over the touchline to throw the ball in he has actually left the field of play. When a player takes a corner kick he steps outside the playing area, and the same thing happens when the goalkeeper has to get the ball from behind the net when it has been kicked past the goal.

What the rule really means—and this is what it should say—is that

when a player for any reason definitely retires from the game for a spell, and also leaves the arena—that is, goes to the dressing-room—he must request the permission of the referee before doing so,

and must also acquaint the referee with his intention to come back when he is again ready.

This idea of getting the permission of the referee to "go off" doesn't even apply to the player who is taken over the touchline while a temporary injury receives attention. In this case the permission to leave the field is presumed to have been given, because in most cases the referee tells the trainer to take the player off so that the game may be continued. Moreover, according to my interpretation of the "leaving the field" rule, a player who in this way does go beyond the touchline for repairs can return to the field at any moment he thinks fit without acquainting the referee or asking his permission.

ACTUALLY, this point has already cropped up in the course of play this season. Blackpool were playing Blackburn Rovers in a Lancashire Cup tie. Imrie, a Blackburn player, was hurt in the course of the game, and went beyond the touchline for a few moments while the trainer gave him a rub down. Just as Imrie was about fit again, the play suddenly became serious from the point of view of the Blackburn club, and without any warning the injured player dashed on to the field and repelled the attack. Was Imrie justified in this action?

My reply is that the injured player was not acting contrary to the spirit of the rules. I remember a similar, and in some ways an amusing incident connected with the Cup Final of 1912, when Barnsley beat West Bromwich Albion. The game was being replayed at Bramall Lane ground. Glendinning, a Barnsley half back, who later went to play for Bolton Wanderers, was hurt, and he retired beyond the touchline so that a damaged foot could be given the attention of the trainer.

In order that this could be done, Glendinning had to take off his boot. The play veered against his side,

and the player noticing this, suddenly dashed on to the field—with only one boot on. The other boot was left in the hands of the trainer.

The onlookers laughed—or at least those of them who were not annoyed laughed, for this must surely have been the only occasion on which a man has taken any part in a Cup Final with one foot only covered by a stocking.

The incident raised a lot of talk owing to the fact that the referee on that occasion didn't say a word to Glendinning.

The action—or should I say inaction?—of the referee was upheld, it being decided that the player had a right to come on just when he chose to do so.

THERE are plenty of professional footballers who play cricket during the summer, and the two games are apt to get a bit confused from time to time. Quite recently, on the Arsenal ground at Highbury, I witnessed a funny incident. The ball was kicked high across the field to Joe Hulme, the Arsenal outside-right, who plays cricket for Middlesex during the summer. Hulme was standing well inside the line—that is, on the field of play—and whether he forgot that he was playing football and not cricket I don't know. Anyway, the player caught the football in his hands perfectly, and, of course, the referee gave a free kick for "hands" against him.

The probable explanation of Hulme's conduct was that he thought the ball was over the line, and his idea was to catch it and throw it in quickly. But

as he caught the leather before it went out of play, there was nothing for the referee to do but to award a free kick.

The confusion of cricket and football was illustrated the other day in a different way. Fulham have on their books a player named Hammond, for whose services several clubs have angled, as it is believed that he might develop into a second Charles Buchan.

One club which was interested in Hammond sent a scout to watch him play. In due course the scout reported on Hammond's ability as a footballer and wound up with this sentence. "I should think that the centuries which Hammond has made for England at cricket have kept him very fit. He looked in the pink of condition." What had happened, of course, was that this particular scout had confused Hammond, the Fulham footballer and Sussex cricketer, with Walter Hammond, the England batsman who played in the recent series of Test matches against Australia. Walter Hammond plays for Gloucester at cricket, and is no longer a footballer, though it may be added that at one time Walter Hammond was a professional footballer on the books of the Bristol Rovers Club.

THERE comes from Glasgow a time-keeping question which is apropos of an incident in a recent match between Celtic and Queen's Park. The referee signalled for time; the players went off the field, and the spectators began to go home. On reaching the dressing-room, however, the referee had his attention drawn to the fact that he had played two minutes short. The man with the whistle, examining his watch again, agreed that this was so, and he ordered the players to turn out again for the two minutes which had been played short.

In the two minutes, Queen's Park scored a goal, and the Celtic followers thought that this was hard luck, as the goal scored when play was resumed meant the loss of a point. However, the referee was within his rights in taking the players back to finish the proper time. Indeed, he would have been wrong not to take the players back when he discovered that he had made a mistake, as the rules say

that a game shall consist of three-quarters of an hour each way.

I remember an occasion some time ago when the referee discovered that he had played short time. He asked the men to turn out again, but some of them were already in the bath, and they refused to do so. "All right," said the referee, "if you don't turn out we shall play the extra minutes without you." That convinced the players of the necessity of getting back into their football togs as quickly as possible.

"OLD REP."

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SAVED FROM THE SEA!

(Continued from page 10.)

had been foul play when I stepped into the dinghy last night."

Vanderpeck started.

"You did not know, when you hurled your companion from the boat at sight of a ship's lights bearing down on you, that you would have to deal with a detective!" said Locke. "No doubt any other skipper would have picked you up and accepted your tale without doubt, and you would have been safe. Unfortunately for you, it was not an ordinary skipper you had to deal with, but a detective!"

The Dutchman clenched his hands harder. It seemed, for a moment, that he would spring on the Baker Street detective, raking the revolver. But he checked himself, and stood still.

"You would have denied that there had been another man in the boat," went on Locke. "But in the darkness his hat had fallen, and you had not noticed it. Then you told me that he had gone mad with thirst, and fallen into the sea at sunset. I knew it was a lie!"

He smiled faintly.

"I am accustomed to using my eyes, Mr. Vanderpeck. There was a spot of blood near where the hat lay—and the hat itself was smeared with it. The blood was wet and fresh. I knew that only a short time could have elapsed since a blow had been struck. The man had not gone over at sunset; he had gone over only a short time before we reached you. And you had struck him down and thrown him into the sea."

A quiver ran through the Dutchman's heavy frame.

"As I reconstructed the scene in my mind," pursued the Baker Street detective, "you struck him suddenly, probably with an oar. He was holding the other oar, and he retained it in his grasp—perhaps attempted to defend himself with it. He fell in the boat, and you carried out your purpose—robbery!"

The Dutchman started again.

"When you left the sinking Sunda-bund you had no time to save any of your effects. But Captain Durie carried his money in a belt—and you knew it!"

Locke, watching the man's whitening face, knew that he had hit the mark. The incoherent muttering of the sick man had given him the clue to the motive for the crime that had been enacted in the drifting dinghy.

"You tore the belt from him," continued Ferrers Locke. "The blow on the head had knocked him out, though it had not stunned him. He was still conscious, and doubtless attempting to resist, when you pitched him into the sea, for he still kept his hold upon the oar. With the remaining oar you made what way you could, leaving him to sink—or to the sharks."

The Dutchman stood as if rooted to the floor. His eyes burned as they were fastened on the Baker Street detective's face.

"You know that he had the money-belt, and you had planned to rob him of it," went on Locke. "But you held your hand till there was a chance of being picked up. If you were to perish with Durie in the open boat, the money-

belt was useless to you. It was when you saw the lights of this yacht, in the night, bearing down towards you, you made up your mind to act, and your treachery took the poor fellow by surprise."

He paused.

"Do you deny it?" he added.

The Dutchman's thick lips curved in a savage sneer.

"Ach! What is the use, when Durie, in the morning, will tell you the same tale?" he answered. "You are very clever, Mynheer Locke! I did not know that I should have a detective to deal with. Any ordinary skipper would have been satisfied with my story. Ach! Durie had five hundred pounds in bank-notes in his belt; I had nothing! I never liked him. Many times he had rated me for kicking the Kanakas, and I knew that he intended to cut me adrift and get a new mate for the Sunda-bund. And, since you know so much, Mynheer Locke, I will tell you more. It was I who ran the schooner on the reef, in revenge on him, and for the sake of the money-belt that I know he always carried, and which I should have a chance to secure when we took to the boats."

"I am not surprised to hear it," said Locke quietly, "and but for the chance that it was Ferrers Locke who picked you up, you would have succeeded, and escaped scot-free. Lay the money-belt on the table."

The Dutchman hesitated a moment. Then he unbuckled a belt from under his shirt and laid it on the table, in silence. It was a leather belt, lined with pockets on the inside, and the pockets were stuffed full.

"And now, mynheer—" breathed the Dutchman.

"Now," said Ferrers Locke—"now that there is no further doubt in the matter, Mynheer Vanderpeck, you will be put in irons, and handed over to the authorities when we reach Aden."

He rose from the settee.

"Open that door and walk before me," he said, with a gesture with the automatic.

"You are the master here!" said Vanderpeck sullenly.

"Quite! Open the door—softly! I do not desire the sleeping man yonder to be disturbed."

The Dutchman turned to the door. His manner was one of complete submission; but his eyes, under his beetling brows, were burning with desperation. His hand was on the door, when, with the sudden swiftness of a tiger, he whirled round and leaped at the Baker Street detective.

It was seldom that Ferrers Locke was taken by surprise; but that sudden tigerish spring surprised him. He had lowered the automatic, and the Dutchman was upon him in the fraction of a second.

Vanderpeck was taking chances with death—chances that only an utterly desperate man would have taken. But chance favoured him. His fierce grasp closed on Ferrers Locke, and the detective staggered back and fell. His head struck violently on the floor of the cabin.

Vanderpeck panted.

Even as he sprawled over the fallen detective, he expected to hear the ring of the revolver, to feel a bullet searing through flesh and bone. Then he realised that chance had favoured him, strangely and unexpectedly.

Ferrers Locke, stunned by the crash of his head on the cabin floor, lay inert beneath him, and the Dutchman, in amazement and savage joy, stared down at a face from which consciousness had fled.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung Takes a Hand!

WUN LUNG listened.

Harry Wharton & Co., in their berths, were sleeping soundly. From Billy Bunter's room came a rumbling snore.

But the little Chinese was not sleeping.

The junior from the Flowery Land had not closed his slanting eyes that night. Wun Lung had sat in the darkness and watched and listened, with his door an inch ajar.

And he was not surprised when the Dutchman's door opened softly and Vanderpeck stepped out into the alleyway, and went along with noiseless footsteps to Ferrers Locke's cabin.

He disappeared, and Wun Lung stepped out in his turn. The little Chinese's slanting eyes gleamed, and in his yellow hand he grasped a heavy Malacca stick. Silently he reached Locke's door and stopped there.

Locke was in the cabin, he knew that. And he knew, too, that the Dutchman had entered it.

He remained at the door and listened.

His suspicion of the Dutchman was strong, amounting to a certainty. But Ferrers Locke was there, and Ferrers Locke was certain to be on his guard, for Wun Lung was assured that Locke shared his suspicion of the Dutchman. And in a few moments he heard a murmur of voices from within.

He could not hear the words, but he knew the tones of Ferrers Locke's voice. The detective was speaking softly, evidently not to disturb the sick man in the berth.

Wun Lung listened, puzzled and dubious. He had not the slightest doubt of the intention with which Vanderpeck had entered the cabin. He had gone there to silence Durie, taking the risk of Locke being on his guard. Locke, evidently, was awake, for it was the murmur of his voice that Wun Lung could hear, with an occasional guttural sound from the Dutchman.

The little Chinese debated in his mind whether to return to his state-room and bed, for it did not seem that his intervention was needed. Locke was awake, and Vanderpeck could not possibly carry out his purpose while the detective was on his guard. But with the caution that was a part of his Chinese nature, he resolved to remain where he was till Vanderpeck was safely out of the cabin.

He listened, and the voices ceased at last.

What was going on in the cabin was a mystery to Wun Lung. There was a brief silence, and then—

He heard the sound of a fall.

The Chinese junior's heart beat.

Who had fallen—Ferrers Locke or the Dutchman? There was no sound of a struggle—silence followed the fall.

Then a muttering, guttural voice, in tones of satisfaction, came faintly through the silence.

"Ach! Goedo hemel! Ach!"

It was not the Dutchman who had fallen!

Wun Lung's right hand closed hard on the Malacca. With his left he pushed the door softly open.

In the electric light that burned brightly in the cabin the whole scene was instantly clear before his eyes.

Ferrers Locke lay on his back, senseless, his upturned face white in the light. The Dutchman had grasped the revolver that had fallen from the detective's nerveless hand. He dared not fire a shot, which would have alarmed the whole ship. Grasping the barrel, he swung up the heavy butt of

BETTER THAN EVER!

**THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL
GOT YOURS YET?**

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the automatic, to bring it down with a crash on the unconscious detective's head. His back was to the door—his burning eyes were fixed on the unconscious face of the man who lay at his mercy.

In those tense moments, when he found himself unexpectedly with the upper hand, and Ferrers Locke at his mercy, the villain's thoughts worked rapidly. To rid himself of Ferrers Locke, then to silence the sick man in the berth—that came first. Then to creep on deck and shoot the mate at his post—then, with the automatic in his hand, to force the crew to provision a boat for him—or perhaps even to seize command of the yacht himself and steam to some spot where he could land in safety.

Such were the half formed thoughts thronging in the Dutchman's savage mind as he grasped the automatic and lifted the heavy butt to dash out the brains of the man who lay at his feet.

Success and escape might have been his. But even as he aimed the murderous blow the door opened behind him, and Wun Lung's eyes were upon him, and the heavy Malacca descended.

Crash!

Jan Vanderpeck never knew what happened.

That stunning blow, crashing fairly on his head, scattered his senses. A million sparks seemed to flash before his dazzled eyes, and with a faint groan he fell senseless across the man he would have murdered.

Wun Lung had put all his strength into the blow. Vanderpeck lay across Ferrers Locke like a log.

The Chinese junior gave him one look, prepared to repeat the blow. But it was not needed. Vanderpeck was stunned.

Wun Lung grinned.

"No killy Fellers Locke this timey, me tinkes!" he murmured.

He dropped the Malacca and dragged the heavy Dutchman from the detective. Vanderpeck rolled away helplessly.

Wun Lung seized a carafe and dashed the water into Ferrers Locke's face.

The detective's eyes opened.

He stared round him wildly, trying to recover his scattered wits, while Wun Lung grinned down at him.

Locke endeavoured to rise. His head was swimming, and Wun Lung lent him his aid. The detective gave one glance at the senseless Dutchman, and with the help of the Chinese junior, staggered to the settee and sat down.

His hand went to his aching head.

"Good heavens!" he breathed.

"Allee light!" said Wun Lung. "Me comey, me knockee Dussman along head with stick, plenty too muchee hard. He no wantee any mole!"

"But how—why—what—" Locke stared in amazement at the little Chinese as he pressed his hand to his head.

Wun Lung chuckled.

"Me savvy that Dussman plenty too much," he explained. "Me no sleep—me watchee eye plenty wide opee. Me savvy that plenty bad egg. Me savvy him along Canton, plenty long time ago. Me watchee! What you tinkes?" And the little Chinese chuckled again.

There was a short silence. Locke's

head was aching from the concussion with the cabin floor, but he was very soon himself again.

"You've saved my life, Wun Lung," he said quietly.

The Chinese junior nodded.

"Me tinkes," he assented, "that Dussman knockee out brains, sposes me no catches him too quick. Allee light! Fellers Locke savee this Chinese from Mandarin Tang Wang. This Chinese savee Fellers Locke from that plenty bad Dussman! Allee light!"

Ferrers Locke smiled faintly.

"The man must be secured at once," he said. "Call Mr. Green."

Wun Lung hurried from the cabin.

Mr. Green's face, when he came down and learned what had happened, was a study.

"By gum!" he said. "By gum!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Go's Wet!

"HOT!" said Bob Cherry.

He mopped his perspiring brow.

It was hot at Aden, there was no doubt about that. It was not merely hot, it was baking. Indeed, as Hurree James Ram Singh justly remarked, the bakefulness was terrific.

The Famous Five were on deck, as the Silver Star lay in the harbour. Billy Bunter, in a state almost of collapse in a deckchair, fanned himself feebly.

Harry Wharton & Co. were watching the boat taking Ferrers Locke ashore. With him went the two survivors of the Sundabund: Captain Durie, looking pale, but very nearly restored to health; the Dutchman, sullen and savage, with irons on his wrists.



Vanderpeck's heroic grasp closed on Ferrers Locke, and the detective staggered back, his automatic dropping from his hand!

"Get the scoundrel away from here and get the irons on him!" said Ferrers Locke.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Mr. Green called a couple of seamen, and the senseless Dutchman was carried away. He was still senseless when the irons were locked on his wrists. It was likely to be a long time before he recovered from Wun Lung's blow.

Wun Lung, with a cheery grin on his little yellow face, went back to his room, this time to bed. Ferrers Locke stretched himself on the settee, with aching head. At four bells he was sleeping, and Mr. Green remained on deck. The Silver Star throbbed on her way under the stars, and towards morning the Dutchman came to his senses—to find himself a prisoner and to hear the clinking of the irons as he moved. And Jan Vanderpeck, cursing savagely in guttural Dutch, realised that his game was up, and that nothing remained for him but to face the sentence of the law when the yacht steamed into Aden.

The skipper of the Sundabund had been very near to death, but Ferrers Locke had pulled him through. And when consciousness came back to him, and he had told what had happened in the dinghy, it had confirmed in almost every detail Locke's theory of the tragedy of the drifting boat.

The skipper of the Sundabund waved a cheery adieu to the juniors among the rail, as the boat pulled away; and they waved back as cheerily. The skipper had lost his schooner; but he had the insurance to draw, and the nest-egg in his money-belt was still intact, thanks to Ferrers Locke. So he went ashore at Aden in cheery spirits.

The dark face of Jan Vanderpeck was a contrast. The Dutchman sat huddled in his irons, sullen rage and bitterness in his looks.

He glanced up at the Greyfriars fellows on the yacht; and as his eyes rested on Wun Lung, they blazed with

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(Continued from
page 13.)

open mouth and cut short the flow of his eloquence quite suddenly.

"Gug-gug-gug!" spluttered Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yurrrrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Bully Bunter strove to dodge the stream of soda-water. But he strove in vain. He dodged across the deck and back again; and Bob Cherry followed him up, the soda-water still flying. Bunter had asked for it, and now he was getting it; and he was getting it in the neck and all over his fat features.

"Ow! Groogh! Gug-gug! Leave off! Oooooooch! I'm wet! I'm drenched! Ooh! Whoooooop!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh—ow! Wow! Ooooooch!"

There was a quavering gasp from the siphon. The soda-water was exhausted. Bunter plumped down on the deck streaming and gasping. He seemed exhausted, too.

"Ow! Beast! Groogh! Wooooh! Oooch!" gasped Bunter. "You awful beast—Ooooooch! Mooooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here endeth the first lesson!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Like me to fetch another soda, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter gasped and spluttered; but he made no other reply. Apparently he did not want another soda.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Ventriloquism!

BOB CHERRY yawned. It was a warm, almost breathless afternoon in the Red Sea.

From Aden, the Silver Star had passed through the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb; and now she was gliding swiftly northwards towards Suez.

The Greyfriars fellows were drawing near to Europe again at last. And they were looking forward to England and Greyfriars. Even Bully Bunter had had enough of the long voyage and was eager to tread terra firma again—even though lessons awaited him at the old school.

In the run across the Indian Ocean, the affair of the castaways of the Sundabund had broken the long monotony. In the passage of the Red Sea, the monotony was unbroken. Arab dhows were sighted sometimes; sometimes there was a glimpse of a caravan on a sandy shore. Bunter ate and slept and talked; and ate and slept and talked again; but the other fellows could not enjoy these resources so much as Bunter did; and they were eager for home.

Bob stretched himself in his deck chair and yawned. His yawn was echoed by several other fellows.

"There's a jolly dhow over yonder!" remarked Bob, with a nod towards a sail on the shining sea. "Now if he was a jolly old pirate, there would be some fun! But there's no pirates in the Red Sea nowadays."

"Not even a wreck or a giddy castaway!" yawned Nugent. "Nothing but sea and sky and Bunter's chin wag."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"The sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,

Lay like a load on my weary eye!"

Bob Cherry quoted from the "Ancient Mariner."

"Go on!" yawned Wharton.

"Forget the rest!" sighed Bob.

"Look here, we could get up some tennis—"

"Too hot!"

"You fellows feel inclined to punt a footer about on deck?"

"Oh, my hat! Not quite!"

Bob Cherry yawned again. There was no doubt that time was hanging rather heavily on the hands of the Greyfriars fellows, homeward bound.

"Tell you what," said Bob, struck by a sudden thought. "Let Bunter give us some of his ventriloquism. He's always trying to shove it at us at Greyfriars. Give us an entertainment, Bunter."

GREYFRIARS CORRESPONDENTS.

No. 17.

This week Fisher T. Fish, the cute guy from the States, comes into our gallery of celebrities. You'll find his good points—and his bad—in this novel verse portraiture by our special hymester.



SAY, Bo—or, in other words, Popper—
I guess you will think me a scamp;

But I hadn't so much as a copper,
And no one would stump up a stamp.
So how could I send you a letter?
To post it unstamped is a crime;
But now I've the dollars I'd better
Pile in and make up for lost time.

Thanks, Pop, for the dollars you cabled.
I guess I was glee—oh, boy!
I do wish that you'd been enabled
To witness me jazzing with joy.
For the tuckshop I made a wild center
(With Bunter hot foot in my wake),
And then I devoured, sir, instantar,
The whole of a whacking plum-cake!

It's nice to be rolling in riches,
A glorious feeling—oh, glee!
The other guys turn up their snitches,
Pretending to scorn £ s. d.
But wealth—oh, Jerusalem crickets!
Makes far more appeal to my soul
Than the glory of capturing wickets,
Or kicking a silly old goal!

I reckon it's rather a pity
You sent me to this sleepy show;
I pine for New York's lively city,
Where people have pep, push, and go!

This place is the same Sleepy Hollow
As it was in the days of Quon Doss;
In sloth and in slumber they wallow—
Too lazy to live, sir, I guess!

Say! when do you cross the Atlantic
To snatch a respite from your biz?
I guess I am jolly well frantic
To see your familiar phiz.
Don't charter the hack at the station,
But come in your smart limousine;
I'm dying to make a sensation
And turn all the other guys green!

Waal, I've spilled a bidful, dear
Popper,
Ose-what! it's a minute to nine!
And bed-time will now put the stopper
Upon this effusion of mine.
As soon as you're willing and able,
And in quite a wealthy posish,
Please send me another nice cable!
Your loving son, FISHER T. FISH.

"Better than nothing, perhaps," yawned Nugent.

"Is it?" said Johnny Bull dubiously.

"Well, it will kill time," said Bob.

"Go it, Bunter!"

Bully Bunter hesitated, and blinked round him a little uneasily. Bunter, as a rule, was very keen to show off his weird ventriloquial powers. He was keener to inflict than other fellows were to endure, as a matter of fact.

But since he had obtained possession of Baldwin, the parrot, by making him talk, the Greyfriars ventriloquist was less eager than usual to show off his ventriloquism.

If Mr. Green learned that he was a ventriloquist, Mr. Green might become

well said that he who hesitates is lost. Bully Bunter simply could not resist the temptation to show off his wonderful powers.

Mr. Green was on deck; but he was at a distance talking with Ferrers Locke. Bunter cleared his throat with a fat little cough.

"That's the jolly old atmospheric!" chuckled Bob. "Go it, Bunter."

"You shuttes up, Cholly, you silly ass!" came a voice from a deckchair in which Wun Lung was curled up.

Bob stared round at him.

"What?" he ejaculated.

"You shuttes up! You talkes muchee too muchee."

Bob Cherry coloured with anger.

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"Why, you cheeky little sweep—" he ejaculated indignantly.

Wun Lung sat up, his almond eyes wide open. He had been quite astonished to hear the sound of his own voice when his own lips were closed.

"Me no speaks!" he exclaimed. "Me no speaks, handsome ole Bob Cherry! Me no sayce nothing altogether."

"Why, you blessed little fiber—" "He, he, he!" came from Bunter.

Bob stared at him.

"Why, you—you—" he gasped. It dawned upon him that Wun Lung's voice had proceeded from the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

Bob Cherry breathed hard and deep.

"I've a jolly good mind—" he began.

"That's enough!" It was Johnny Bull's voice. "None of your bullying here."

Bob swung round on Johnny Bull with a glare of mingled astonishment and wrath.

"You cheeky ass!" he roared.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "So that was some more of your ventriloquism, was it? Sorry, Johnny, old man; I thought—"

"Oh, you can't think!" came Wharton's voice. And so exact was the imitation that Bob spun round towards the captain of the Remove.

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, old chap," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It's Bunter."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"He, he, he!" Billy Bunter's fat face was pink with merriment. "He, he, he! You asked me to, you know. He, he, he!"

"I didn't ask you to play rotten tricks, you fat rotter!" roared Bob. "I've a jolly good mind to bump you out of that chair on your silly neck."

"Don't yell, you ass!" came Wharton's voice.

"I'll yell as loud as I like," snorted Bob, "and I can jolly well tell you—"

"You ass, it's Bunter!" gasped Wharton.

"He, he, he!"

"You asked for some ventriloquism," chuckled Nugent. "Now you're getting it."

"Well, Bunter's asked for something, too, and he's going to get it!" snapped Bob; and he grasped the deckchair in which the Owl of the Remove was sprawling, with both hands, and upended it.

Bump!

"Yarooogh!"

There was a loud concussion, and a louder roar, as William George Bunter landed on the deck.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yarooogh! Oh, my hat! Whoooooop!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's ventriloquial voice was silent now. But his natural voice was going strong.

"Yow-ow-ow! Beast! Whoop! Yooop! Oooooop!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Man at Port Said!

PORT SAID at last!

The Red Sea was left behind, and the Suez Canal, and the Silver Star stopped at Port Said for coal. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at the town from the yacht's deck, remembering their run ashore, when

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they had stopped at that salubrious port on their way to China, and had become mixed up in a native riot. Bunter blinked rather sourly at Port Said, remembering his disastrous ride on a donkey there. And when Bob Cherry asked him if he remembered his relations at Port Said Bunter only grunted.

The yacht remained a couple of days in the Egyptian port. On the second day the Greyfriars fellows were allowed to go ashore, Locke himself taking them for a walk through the town. To the surprise—not to say the joy—of the other fellows, Bunter declined to go.

"What's the good of fegging about in this beastly heat?" demanded Bunter. "I've seen the place, and I don't think much of it. Sorry, but I'm not coming."

Bunter spoke with firmness.

And the chums of the Remove smiled.

Bunter evidently had the impression that he was spoiling the excursion by depriving the party of his fascinating company. The other fellows did not share that impression—quite the reverse, in fact.

"Sure you won't come, fatty?" asked Bob. "You don't want to see your relations again?"

"Yah!"

And Bunter stayed behind, and the Famous Five and Wun Lung went ashore with Ferrers Locke, and walked about the town and enjoyed a donkey ride, and contrived to have a good time.

Bunter also had a good time, according to his own ideas. He stretched his fat limbs in a deckchair, under an awning, and lased. After he had lased for a considerable time he went below and packed away an extensive meal. Then he returned to the deckchair and lased again.

As he sat blinking in the shade of the awning Bunter's eyes turned idly on a steamer that had glided into the basin and taken up her anchorage at a little distance from the Silver Star.

It was a steamer from the East—one of the regular boats from India that stopped at Aden and Port Said on its way to Europe.

Bunter was not particularly interested in the steamer, but he blinked at it because there was nothing else to blink at. And so it happened that he was the witness of a little scene on the steamer. All of a sudden there was a scuffling on her deck, an outbreak of excited voices, and a man leaped over the rail and plunged headlong into the water.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bunter.

He jumped up from his chair and ran to the side, staring at the man who had leaped from the steamer.

He was a man of powerful and muscular frame, dressed in a dingy and tattered cotton suit, and evidently a good swimmer, for he was striking out with great energy for the landing place. From the steamer a number of deckhands were throwing lumps of coal after him, but no boat was lowered.

"I say, Mr. Green," called out Bunter, "that's a man overboard."

The mate of the Silver Star, who had witnessed the incident also, gave an indifferant grunt.

"Stowaway, I reckon," he said.

"Oh!" said Bunter.

Mr. Green gave an indifferant glance at the swimmer. He had no love for stowaways.

"Packed himself away among the cargo at Bombay or Aden!" grunted Mr. Green. "They rooted him out, and he's jumped overboard. They ought to pick him up and get him sent to chokay for stealing a passage."

And Mr. Green turned away, giving

the man in the water no further attention.

Bunter, leaning on the yacht's rail, continued to watch him.

The man was swimming strongly, and was plainly in no danger in the water. The steamer's captain, apparently, did not think it worth while to lower a boat and pick him up to send him to prison for stowing himself away. But a number of the crew, with grinning faces, pelted him with lumps of coal as he swam.

The swimmer headed for the yacht, to place the Silver Star between himself and the steamer as a screen from the volleying of coal chunks.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

As the man drew nearer there seemed to be something familiar about him to the eyes of the Owl of the Remove.

But it was not till he was quite close that the short-sighted Owl recognised the dark, heavy, brutal face above the water.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

His little round eyes almost started through his spectacles as he stared at that heavy, sullen, savage Dutch face.

"Him!" ejaculated Bunter.

The man swept by within a biscuit's toss of the rail where Bunter was standing and staring over.

His face was lifted, and his sunken eyes, under their beetling brows, gleamed up at the yacht. There was recognition in the savage glance he threw at the Silver Star.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

The swimmer swept on.

Billy Bunter blinked round for Mr. Green. He was certain that he had recognised the swimmer—there was no mistaking that heavy, harsh face, those sunken eyes, and beetling brows.

"I say, Mr. Green!" yelled Bunter.

The mate was busy and did not heed him. Bunter rolled across the deck and jerked at his sleeve.

"I say—" he gasped.

"Don't bother!" grunted Mr. Green.

"It's the Dutchman!"

"What the holy amoke do you mean!" snapped Mr. Green. "Who's a Dutchman?"

"That swimmer—that stowaway!" gasped Bunter. "It's the Dutchman we left at Aden—Vanderpeck."

Mr. Green stared at him.

"What rot are you talking?" he demanded.

"It's him," said Bunter, emphatically and ungrammatically. "It's Vanderpeck, the Dutchman—"

"Nonsense!" answered Mr. Green.

"I tell you he jolly well is!" exclaimed Bunter. "He must have got away at Aden somehow and stowed himself on that steamer. I tell you—"

"Oh, rot!" grunted Mr. Green.

"Look at him then!" hooted Bunter.

The mate grunted again and strode to the side and stared after the swimmer. But the man was at a good distance now, and Mr. Green was able to see little more than the back of a dark head in the gleaming sunlight on the water of the basin.

"Rot!" he said; and he returned to his business.

Billy Bunter snorted and went back to his deckchair. The swimmer vanished from sight among a number of native boats in the harbour. Mr. Green gave him no attention, and Bunter soon went to sleep and forgot him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bunter awakened suddenly. He sat up and blinked at the Greyfriars juniors. The sun was setting over Port Said, and the shore party had returned, in great spirits. Strange to relate, they seemed to have enjoyed the excursion, though

deprived of the society of William George Bunter.

"Been asleep all day, old fat man?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter.

"What did you wake me up for? I was just dreaming about that feed we had at old Wun's house at Canton."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You silly chump!"

"But we're just going to have supper!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "That's worth waking up for, isn't it?"

"Oh! Yes. Rather!" Bunter detached himself from the deckchair. "I say, you fellows, I've seen that Dutchman."

"What Dutchman?"

"That man Vanderpeck—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry, staring at him. "Mean to say your specs carry all the way from Port Said to Aden?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You silly ass! he's here!" snorted Bunter.

"Here?" Bob glanced round the yacht's deck. "I don't seem to see him."

"I mean, he's at Port Said. He was stowed away on that steamer that's come in from Aden; and he swam ashore, and I saw him."

"Were you awake at the time?" asked Johnny Bull, grinning.

"Of course I was, you silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "Do you think I dreamed it, you chump?"

"Well, yes; I rather think you did, if you're not trying to pull our leg," answered Johnny.

"The dreamfulness was terrific, my esteemed Bunter," said Hurree Singh. "The estimable and execrable Dutchman is a prisoner in esteemed chokey."

"He must have got away," said Bunter. "I saw him! That fathead Green wouldn't take any notice. Think I'd better tell Mr. Locke!"

"Better go to sleep and dream again," suggested Johnny Bull.

And the juniors chuckled and went below. Bunter snorted and followed them. But to the surprise of the Famous Five, Ferrers Locke gave Bunter some attention when he told the detective what he had seen.

"You don't think it's possible, sir?" asked Bob.

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"It is possible," he said. "The man is a desperate and resourceful villain, and he may have escaped and succeeded in stowing himself away on the steamer at Aden. You are quite sure you recognised him, Bunter?"

"Oh, quite!" answered Bunter. "But that idiot Green—"

"Never mind that! It is possible that it was the man, and I shall leave word with the Port Said police," said Locke. And with that the matter



The whizzing dollar, thrown by the native boy, caught Mr. Green on the ear. "Whooop!" There was a roar of surprise and wrath from the mate.

dropped; and the Greyfriars fellows soon forget all about Jan Vanderpeck. But they were destined to be reminded of the Dutchman before they saw the white cliffs of England.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Once Too Often!

CACKLE, cackle, cackle! Baldwin, the parrot, perched on the skylight, was talking to himself. Baldwin often talked to himself in his own parrot-language. But he still persisted in refusing to talk to anyone else in any other language.

The blue Mediterranean rolled round the Silver Star, steaming on for Marseilles. Harry Wharton & Co. were looking out to catch a distant view of Malta. Billy Bunter was regarding Baldwin with a very thoughtful look.

Having obtained possession of that parrot on cheap terms, Bunter had looked forward to selling Baldwin on his arrival in England. But it had lately dawned on his fat brain that there was, so to speak, a lion in the path.

When they reached England there would be the Customs to pass, and Bunter remembered having heard that there was an embargo on the importation of parrots, owing to the outbreak of some disease with a long name that he had forgotten. This was rather awkward for Bunter, from a profiteering point of view.

"It's all rot, you know," Bunter remarked irritably. "I say, you fellows, do you think I shall be able to

sneak that parrot in without being noticed?"

"Hide him in your hat," suggested Bob Cherry. "If he cackles they will suppose it is you talking. Your voices are much alike."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "I suppose I shall have to sell him before we get home. It's rather rotten—a good talking parrot is valuable."

"But he doesn't talk," said Bob.

Bunter grinned. He had no doubt about being able to make the parrot talk when the time came to sell him.

Mr. Green was eyeing the parrot with a somewhat suspicious eye. It had puzzled Mr. Green very much that Baldwin had talked once, and never again. The mate was vaguely suspicious on the subject. Many times since the parrot had become Bunter's property Mr. Green had talked to him, but he had never succeeded in eliciting an answer. It really was very curious.

Bunter blinked at the mate.

"If you'd like that parrot back, Mr. Green, I'd let you have him cheap," he said. "Make it a pound, and he's yours."

Mr. Green shook his head. Having already given seven dollars for a parrot that would not talk, he was not inclined to give a pound for a parrot that talked once, and for ever after held his peace.

"Well, if I can't get him home, he's no use to me," said Bunter. "I'll make it fifteen shillings and teach him to talk for you."

Mr. Green shook his head again. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,185

"He won't talk," he grunted. "He's an annoying bird. Talked just once, and then shut up like an oyster. That Malay at Singapore did me over that bird."

And the mate swung away.

Billy Bunter grunted discontentedly. There was no doubt that Mr. Green would willingly have given fifteen shillings for Baldwin, if Baldwin would have talked. But in the presence of the Famous Five the Greyfriars ventriloquist could not venture to make him talk. It would have been a little too palpable in the presence of fellows who knew all about his ventriloquist stunts.

But when tea-time came Bunter had his opportunity, as on the previous occasion. It went sorely against the grain with Bunter to be late for a meal, but fifteen shillings was fifteen shillings!

"Grub, fatty!" called out Bob Cherry as the juniors went down.

"I'm not hungry," answered Bunter.

"Wha-a-a-t?"

The statement was so astonishing that all the juniors stared at William George Bunter.

"Not hungry!" said Johnny Bull dazedly.

"Some fellows aren't always thinking of eating, like you fellows!" said Bunter, with a sniff.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You go down to tea," said Bunter. "I'll come later. The fact is, I—I'm admiring the scenery."

"Holy smoke!"

The idea of Bunter remaining on deck to admire the scenery, while a meal was waiting for him down below, almost overcame the juniors. They went down the stairs almost dazed.

"What the thump is that fat duffor up to?" asked Bob Cherry. "What does he want to get shut of us for all of a sudden?"

"Goodness knows," said Nugent. "But let him rip—we got shut of him at the same time."

"He's up to something," said Bob, pausing on the stairs. "Hark!"

From the deck, as soon as the juniors had disappeared, came a fat little cough. Bob Cherry grinned.

"That's his jolly old atmospherics," he whispered. "He's going to turn on the ventriloquism and play some trick on old Green. Let's wait and see."

And the juniors, grinning, waited, just out of sight on the stairs. There was another fat little cough above.

Billy Bunter blinked after the juniors, satisfied that they had gone down to tea and were out of hearing. Then he blinked at the mate.

"I say, Mr. Green."

The mate glanced round.

"Just come here a minute," said Bunter. "Baldwin's just going to talk. I can see it in his eye."

"Rot!" said Mr. Green. But he came over to the skylight.

"Rot!" repeated Baldwin, in exactly the mate's voice; and Mr. Green jumped almost clear of the deck.

"Great tornadoes!" ejaculated Mr. Green. "He's talking again."

He stared in amazement at the peculiar bird. Baldwin blinked at him with red, solemn eyes.

"You see, he's picking it up," explained Bunter blandly. "You can say anything you like to him now, and he will repeat it."

"My word!" said Mr. Green.

"My word!" repeated Baldwin, with the assistance of the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

"Well, this beats it!" said Mr. Green.

"Well, this beats it!" said Baldwin.

"Blessed if I ever saw such a bird!" exclaimed the mate in astonishment.

"Blessed if I ever saw such a bird!" repeated Baldwin.

"Great Scott!"

"Great Scott!" came like an echo.

"Why, the blessed bird repeats everything!" exclaimed the mate. "He's picked it up at last, no mistake about that."

"No mistake about that!" said Baldwin.

"Say 'Ship ahoy!'" commanded Mr. Green.

"Ship ahoy!" came obediently from Baldwin.

"Oh, good!" gasped Mr. Green.

"Oh, good!" said Baldwin.

"Say 'Roll me down to Rio,' went on the mate.

"Roll me down to Rio!" said Baldwin.

"Every blessed word!" gasped Mr. Green.

"Every blessed word!" came from Baldwin, with Bunter's aid. "Ship ahoy! Oh, good! Roll me down to Rio!"

"Fine!" ejaculated Mr. Green.

"Well, what do you say now?" asked Bunter cheerfully. "A bird that talks like that is worth fifteen bob, I should think."

"I should think so," said Mr. Green. And he added playfully to the parrot: "Think you're worth fifteen bob, Baldwin?"

"What-ho!" answered Baldwin. "Make it a pound!"

Mr. Green fairly staggered.

"Jever hear a bird talk like that?" he stuttered. "Why that bird's worth his weight in gold! It's uncanny, that's what it is! Here's your fifteen shillings, Master Bunter, and I'm glad to have him back at the price."

Billy Bunter grinned, and stretched out a fat hand for the fifteen shillings. But the fat hand never touched that sum, for at the same moment a grip was laid on Bunter's fat neck from behind, and he was sat down on the deck with a terrific concussion.

Bump!

"Yaroooooh!"

"You fat villain!" roared Bob Cherry.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Awful!

BILLY BUNTER had expected to be late for tea that day. As it turned out, he was much later than he had expected.

From the state-room on board the Silver Star yacht, occupied by Billy Bunter, came a sound of dismal groaning.

Bunter was down on his luck.

Everybody seemed down on Bunter; why, he did not know. But there was no doubt about the fact.

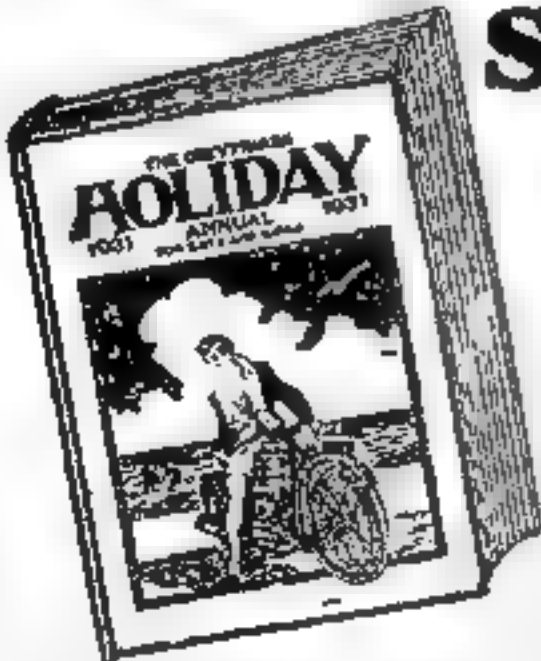
Mr. Green, having learned at last how it was that Baldwin had talked, had got quite excited on the subject. Not only had he accused Bunter of swindling him, but he had kicked Bunter. Not only had he kicked him, but he had kicked him hard. And he had re-taken possession of the parrot; and Bunter had lost not only Baldwin, but the fifteen shillings as well. All that he received from Mr. Green was a kicking.

From the Greyfriars juniors he received no sympathy. They told him he was a fat spoofer and a podgy swindler and several other things, and gave point to their remarks by bumping him on the deck, after they had told him what they thought of him.

Bristling with indignation, Billy Bunter laid the matter before Ferrers Locke. And Locke, instead of seeing at a glance what a deeply injured fellow he was, had told him that he was an unscrupulous young rascal, and ordered him to his room; to remain there without tea.

Hence the present dismal state of William George Bunter. He was hungry—and the awful prospect of getting nothing to eat before supper made him hungrier. He was, of course, feeling ill-used. If the fellows couldn't admire his cleverness in diddling Mr. Green, at least they needn't have made out that it was unscrupulous! Bunter felt very sore about that. And that

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beast Locke took just the same view as Mr. Green and the Greyfriars fellows, and Bunter was to miss his tea as a punishment.

Any other sentence Bunter might have borne with fortitude. But now he was feeling, like Cain of old, that his punishment was more than he could bear. Missing a meal might have been painful to any fellow. To Billy Bunter it was positive torture. He sat in his state-room and groaned.

There was a step outside at last. Bunter ceased to groan and brightened up. Perhaps it was one of the fellows bringing him something to eat. After all, it was the least they could do, after all he had done for them!

There was a tap at the door, and it opened. Rawson, the steward, looked in. There was a somewhat grim expression on Rawson's face, but Bunter, in his eagerness, did not notice it.

"I say, Rawson! You brought me something?" he exclaimed. "I say, I'm frightfully hungry. That beast Locke is injuring my health by keeping me without food, you know. I'm famished."

"You must be, sir!" said Rawson sardonically. "You didn't eat more than enough for ten fellows at lunch."

"Don't you be cheeky!" snapped Bunter. "I—I—I mean, you might get me something, Rawson—just a cake would do—"

"Against orders, sir!" said Rawson. "Mr. Locke says you're not to have anything till supper."

"Blow Mr. Locke!" said Bunter savagely.

"Blow him as 'ard as you like, if he'll let you," agreed Rawson. "But what I come here for is this—"

"Look here, you might bring a fellow a pie or something," said Bunter. "I'm going to give you a jolly good tip at the end of the voyage, Rawson. I always tip servants well when they're civil, and know their place. Cut off and get me a pudding or something."

"What I come here for is this, Master Bunter," said Rawson stolidly. "You owe me a dollar."

"What?" yelled Bunter.

"That dollar you got off me long ago in the Indian Ocean for making that thero parrot talk!" said Rawson darkly. "I know now 'ow you made him talk! And I want that dollar!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter!" roared Bunter, in great wrath. Evidently Rawson had come to the room not to give but to receive.

"You handing over that dollar, sir?" asked Rawson. "That dollar what you swindled me out of, sir?"

"Go and eat cake!"

"I'm waiting for that there dollar!"

"Get out of my cabin!" booted Bunter; "and I can jolly well tell you that I jolly well won't tip you now. So there!"

"I dessey I shan't be a lot the poorer, sir!" said Rawson sarcastically. "And I ain't asking you for tips, but for that there dollar what you spoofed me out of in a bet. And if you don't 'and it over I'm going to Mr. Locke about it."

Billy Bunter glared at the steward with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. But slowly, reluctantly, he extracted a dollar from his pocket and handed it to Rawson. He had only too much reason to suppose that Mr. Locke would take an unpleasant view of the transaction if he heard of it. He might even be deprived of supper as well as tea!

"Take it and go!" snapped Bunter.

"Thank you, sir," said Rawson, pocketing the coin; "and if you don't mind my mentioning it, sir, there's a

saying that honesty is the best policy, sir!"

And Rawson left the state-room, leaving Bunter a dollar the poorer, and as hungry as ever.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

Really, he began to wish that he had not been such a remarkably clever ventriloquist, or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he had not made such

a remarkable use of his ventriloquism. Certainly he had earned more kicks than halfpence by his remarkable cleverness.

Harry Wharton & Co. were on deck, apparently forgetful of Bunter and his woes. There was nothing to be hoped for from Rawson. Bunter blinked out of his doorway at last, in the hope of
(Continued on next page.)

"Come into the Office, Boys!"

THE first letter which I have found in my post-bag this week comes from Scotland, and voices a SOS to Glasgow readers.

CAN YOU PLAY THE SAXOPHONE?

Or the piano? Or the trumpet? Or the violin? Or any instrument that would be useful in a jazz band? If you can, and you live near Springburn, will you get into touch with Andrew Gemmell, who is anxious to start an amateur jazz band, and would like fellow-Magnetites to help him out? Andrew's full address is: 32, Midton Street, Springburn, Glasgow, N., and he'll be pleased to hear from anyone who is interested. Good luck to you and your chains, Andrew!

Have you ever wondered where we got the everyday expressions which we use? S. D. Sexton, of Southampton, has, and he wants to know if I can tell him where the phrase, "Giving the cold shoulder" came from. There are several derivations of this phrase, one of which is that people who did not like the company of a certain person shrugged their shoulders, as if they were suddenly cold. This shrug of the shoulder became known as "the cold shoulder," and was a sign that the person to whom it was given was not wanted.

Another story is that the phrase came as a result of the famous Klondike gold rush, when, as you know, men were forced to sleep out in the open, and many were frozen to death. A man awakening to find his "pard" frozen to death alongside him, would say that he had been given the cold shoulder.

CAN you answer this query, which comes from James Longdon, of Romsey? He wants to know:

WHAT IS A BARRACUDA?

He has heard the word in connection with a tale of the Spanish Main—and the Spanish Main is the haunt of the Barracuda, which is a decidedly ferocious monster of the seas, more savage, even, than the shark. It is a bony fish, which often attains a length of five feet, and is largely composed of vicious teeth. A curious thing about the Barracuda is that when it is hungry it develops stripes, which vanish again as soon as it has had a square meal.

Talking about monsters of the deep reminds me of

A VERY CURIOUS PET

which is kept by the members of a swimming club in Australia. This is nothing less than a monster shark which found its way into a sea-water swimming-bath—and has been there ever since! The shark is a most difficult fish to keep

in captivity—in fact, this is the only one which has remained robust of its freedom for so long! It has not yet become tame, but its keeper frequently dives into the water and engages in a game of "catch" with his unruly charge. So far he has not been "caught." When he has—well, either a new keeper or a new shark will be required!

THERE is just space to reply to one more query, and then I must turn my attention to the Black Book. This query comes from a reader who spent a holiday in the Isle of Wight, and wants to know something about

THE NAB TOWER.

This great tower, which is situated on the eastern seaboard of the Isle of Wight, and now serves the peaceful purpose of a light-tower, was originally intended for use during the War in the Strait of Dover, where it would have been connected up with the anti-submarine nets which protected the Strait. It was not quite finished when the War came to an end, and was mounted on an enormous pontoon and towed to its present position, where, with a powerful light upon it, it was left to act as a warning beacon. Another similar tower was dismantled, and the Nab Tower is now the only survivor of a War produce which has been attuned to the requirements of peace.

Black Book forward, please!

Here's a ripping yarn in store for you next week! It's entitled:

"PROUT'S LOVELY BLACK EYE!"

and, of course, it's by your favourite author, Frank Richards. He's got several O.K. surprises in store for you, ditto K.O. surprises, too, and there are exciting situations all the way through. So B.Y.Y.Y. in other words, "Be wise"—and don't miss it, whatever you do!

Need I mention the fine instalment of our serial? You'll find John Brearley, the author, at his best—and you know how good he can be! Next week's instalment of "Up, the Rovers!" will grip you from the first line to the last—and you'll long for more!

There are plenty of chuckles for you, too, in this bumper issue, for, in addition to the "Greyfriars Herald," there'll be limericks and jokes which have won prizes for lucky readers.

Of course, we mustn't leave out "Old Ref's" interesting footer talk! And if your query hasn't been answered in my chat yet—well, look out for it, together with answers to other interesting inquiries sent in by readers.

YOUR EDITOR.

seeing someone whom he could console into bringing him a snack. The merest bribe would have tided him over till supper—such as a couple of pounds of biscuits or a pie. Hope dawned in his dismal fat visage as he sighted Wun Lung.

The Chinese junior grinned at him.

"Fat ole Buntce vally hungry?" he asked.

"Starving!" groaned Bunter. "I say, kid, bring me something to eat. Any old thing will do. You know how I saved your life in China—"

"Me no savvy," answered Wun Lung, shaking his head.

"Well I jolly well did, and all the other fellows, too," growled Bunter. "I never saw such an ungrateful lot. I say, be a sport, kid, and sneak me something to eat."

"Ma plenty solly for pool ole Buntce," said Wun Lung. "Me takee pape gettee fishes."

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter. "If you could bag a fish for me—"

"Buntce likes sole?"

"Are they cooking soles?" asked Bunter, his mouth watering at the prospect. "I say, if you could bag me a sole, I—I'd never forget it."

"Plaps Buntce no likes sole?"

"My dear chap, I like a fried sole better than any other fish in the sea. You bag it for me—"

"Plaps not fied."

"I don't care how it's cooked! Bag it for me, old chap! Do!" gasped Bunter. "Don't stand there grinning like a beastly yellow heathen. Cut oil and bag that sole."

"Buntce plenty sure Buntce likes?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" gasped Bunter.

"Allee light! Buntce waites till me comey back." And the little Chinese glided away.

Bunter waited anxiously. He had a doubt that Wun Lung might be pulling his fat leg, remembering the little heathen's propensity for practical jokes. It was some time before Wun Lung returned, and every minute, to Bunter, crawled by on leaden wings.

He gasped with relief when the Chinese junior came in sight again at last, with a parcel in his hand. Wun Lung tiptoed to his door with an air of great caution. As Mr. Locke had ordered Bunter to be deprived of his tea, by way of punishment, it was necessary to be cautious in supplying him with food. Perhaps that was why Wun Lung had wrapped the sole up so carefully. It was a large, well-wrapped parcel that he handed to Bunter.

"Hopes you likee this vally nicey sole, old fat Buntce?" he said.

"You bet!" said Bunter.

He grabbed the parcel, and whipped it into his room, fearful that it might be seen. Wun Lung glided away, grinning; and he was still grinning when he went on deck and joined the other fellows there.

Bunter unwrapped the parcel with feverish haste. There were several wrappings of paper, and a wrapping of old sail cloth. Eagerly the fat junior tore away wrapping after wrapping.

The sole was revealed.

Bunter stared at it.

It was a sole. There was no doubt about that! Wun Lung had kept his word, and brought him a sole.

But it was not a fried sole. It was not a grilled sole. It was not a sole in the fishy sense of the word at all.

It was the sole of an old sea boot.

Bunter gazed at it.

Bunter could eat almost anything. He was almost as catholic in his tastes as an ostrich. But even Bunter had his

limits. He could not eat the ancient, well-worn sole of a disused sea-boot!

"Beast!" shrieked Bunter.

From the deck above came a cheery sound.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently that unspeakable Chinese was telling the other fellows how he had fed Bunter. They seemed to be entertained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter. "Oh dear! Beast! Oh crikey!"

And William George Bunter sank down on his berth, and the state-room echoed to his groaning. And his groans did not cease till—after several centuries, as it seemed to Bunter—supper was announced.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"JOLLY, isn't it?" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Ripping!" said Nugent.

"The ripfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Greyfriars party were ashore at last. The yacht *Silver Star* lay in the harbour at Marseilles, and from that French city the party were to take the train home. It had been a great trip; but the chums of the *Remove* were glad to set their feet on land once more.

They were staying at Marseilles for the night; and after dinner at the hotel they walked down the brightly-lighted Cannabiere, with Ferrers Locke, amid jostling crowds of many nationalities, under the bright stars and clear sky of the South.

Now they were sitting at the little tables outside a cafe, sipping coffee, and watching the varied crowds pass and repass. Every face was bright and cheery, with one exception. Billy Bunter, suffering under a sense of injury, was morose.

All through the trip to China and back again Bunter had never been treated with distinction that was his due. Naturally he was rather sore about it. He was sore also at the outcome of his business transactions with Mr. Green in the matter of parrots. But he was sorest of all over those hours of anguish he had spent in his state-room waiting for supper.

Bunter was not, as a rule, the fellow to bear grudges; but that awful experience was not easily forgotten. Like the prophet of old, Bunter was angry, and felt that he did well to be angry.

His fat thoughts turned on the task—the rather difficult task—of making Mr. Locke "sit up." Bunter would have liked to kick him; but that, obviously, was out of the question.

Now, as the Greyfriars fellows sat in a cheery group at the open-air cafe on the Cannabiere, Bunter was thinking.

He rose suddenly from the table.

"I'm going back to the hotel!" he announced.

Bob Cherry looked round.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Fed-up with the jolly old Cannabiere already?" he asked.

"I'm sleepy."

"Well, it's bed-time at Greyfriars!" remarked Wharton, looking at his watch. "We're all going back soon, Bunter. Better stick to us, or you may lose yourself."

"And think what a loss that would be!" said Bob.

"The lossfulness would be terrific!"

"I say, you fellows, don't you hurry back!" said Bunter. "I shan't get lost; I'm going to take a taxi. I

suppose one of you fellows will lend me a few francs to pay for a taxi."

"It's worth it!" remarked Johnny Ball.

Ferrers Locke glanced at Bunter.

"If you wish to go to bed, Bunter, you had better take a taxi back to the *Lion d'Or*," he said, "otherwise, you would certainly lose yourself. Here is the fare."

And a taxi rolled away with the Owl of the *Remove*. As a matter of fact, the cheery party at the cafe did not miss him.

Bunter grinned as he rolled away through the streets of Marseilles.

The Greyfriars party were not likely to remain out much longer; but as they were going to walk back to the hotel, Bunter was certain to arrive there ahead of them. And Bunter had a little scheme to carry out before Ferrers Locke arrived. His powerful brain had been working at full pressure; and he had evolved a scheme for the discomfiture of the Baker Street detective.

He arrived at the Hotel *Lion d'Or*, dismissed the taxi, and rolled in. The lift carried him up to the sleeping quarters.

But it was not to his own room that the Owl of the *Remove* proceeded. The long corridor on which the bed-rooms opened was deserted and dusky, only a single light burning at one end of it. Bunter, like Moses of old, looked this way and that way and saw that there was no man. There was no eye on William George Bunter when he rolled into Ferrers Locke's room, and closed the door softly behind him.

The room was unlighted, but Bunter did not need to turn on a light. There was a good deal of light through the windows from the well-lit street without—plenty for Bunter's purpose.

He chuckled softly.

He turned down the coverlet on Ferrers Locke's bed, took the jug from the washstand, and emptied it in the middle of the bed. Then he replaced the coverlet over the swamped bed, and chuckled again.

"I fancy that will make the beast sit up!" murmured Bunter.

He stood with the jug in his fat hand, listening to the drip-drip of water under the bed.

He listened rather anxiously. He did not want the drip-drip to be audible when Mr. Locke arrived in the room. But after a couple of minutes it ceased.

He stepped back to the washstand and replaced the jug. Then he gave a sudden jump, and his fat heart throbbed.

There was a footstep in the corridor outside.

It could not be Locke yet. That was impossible. No doubt it was some garcon or chambermaid coming to the room.

But Bunter did not want to be caught in Ferrers Locke's room by a garcon or a chambermaid—considering the state the bed was in. He wanted to make Mr. Locke "sit up," but he did not want the Baker Street detective to learn to whom he owed that kind attention.

Swiftly Bunter backed into a dusky corner, hidden from view by one of those immense wardrobes that generally adorn rooms in French hotels.

He backed quietly into that hidden corner, to wait for the garcon or chambermaid, or whoever it was, to go.

A moment later the door opened.

It opened softly and swiftly, and closed again at once. So swift was the opening and closing that Bunter wondered whether anybody had entered

Unaware of the fact that the Dutchman was concealed behind the door, and Bunter behind the wardrobe, Ferrers Locke entered the room!



the room at all. But the next moment there was a soft footfall.

Why a garcon or a chambermaid should enter the room in that stealthy, surreptitious manner was a mystery to Bunter. And it suddenly flashed into his fat mind that it was neither garcon nor chambermaid who had entered. It was much more likely to be some hotel thief.

Billy Bunter felt a disagreeable tremor.

He crouched still more closely in the hidden corner behind the big wardrobe, and listened.

There was no sound. Whoever had entered the room was standing silent, doubtless listening.

Bunter ventured to peer out from behind a corner of the wardrobe at last. He glimpsed a heavy, muscular figure standing in the glimmer that came from the window. Even in the gloom it seemed to Bunter that there was something familiar about that figure.

It stirred, and Bunter's head popped back like that of a tortoise into its shell. His heart was beating unpleasantly.

"Ach!" He heard a low, muttering voice. "Het is donker! Ach!"

Bunter's podgy heart almost died in his breast.

He did not understand the words, but he knew that they were Dutch. And the voice, low and muttering as it was, was familiar to his ears. The man standing in the dusky room was Jan Vanderpock.

Bunter hardly breathed.

It was the Dutch mate of the Sunda-bund, and he was in Ferrers Locke's room in the Hotel Lion d'Or. Bunter could guess why.

The perspiration trickled down his fat

face as he crouched in the dark corner. If the Dutchman discovered him—

Bunter's blood ran cold at the thought. He knew why Vanderpock was there—for revenge upon the detective who had defeated his dastardly schemes and handed him over to the law. Likely enough, Vanderpock had reached Marseilles ahead of the Silver Star, in one of the Mediterranean steamers. Probably he had watched for the yacht and spied on the Greyfriars party ashore. At all events, there he was, lurking in the shadows of Ferrers Locke's room, waiting for the Baker Street detective to come in. And if he found Bunter there—one twist of his sinewy hand on a fat neck would prevent any possibility of the fat junior giving the alarm.

Bunter could have groaned aloud with terror. But he was very careful to keep silent.

Evidently the Dutchman had no suspicion that anyone else was in the room. Bunter heard him moving about softly, but he stopped again. A faint rustle of a curtain showed that he was at the window. Bunter guessed that, keeping back in the shadow of the curtain, the ruffian was watching the street below for the return of Ferrers Locke and the Greyfriars juniors.

The fat junior's brain was in a whirl. When Ferrers Locke came—what then? He knew what was in the Dutchman's mind.

Perspiring with terror, Bunter crouched silent; and the man stood motionless at the window, watching.

But he stirred at last.

From his dark corner, Bunter saw a shadow cross the room. The Dutchman placed himself against the wall, behind the door, so that it would conceal him

when it opened. There he remained motionless and silent—so silent that Bunter almost doubted whether he was still in the room.

There were footfalls in the corridor, a sound of voices. Bunter trembled. The Greyfriars party had returned.

Footsteps passed the door. Then, through the door, Bunter heard the voice of Ferrers Locke clearly.

"Good-night, my boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Footsteps passed on.

The door opened.

Ferrers Locke switched on the light, entered, and closed the door. And the next instant he was on his back on the floor, borne there by the fierce spring of the watching ruffian, and two savage hands clutched at his throat and choked his utterance.

THE APPROPRIATE CHAPTER

Home Again!

FERRERS LOCKE stared up at the hard, grim, savage face that was bent over him.

He could not speak.

He could scarcely stir. The sudden, savage attack had taken him completely off his guard.

He was stretched on his back, the sinewy Dutchman over him. Each of his arms was pinned under a heavy, muscular knee, pinned down helplessly to the floor. And the savage grip on his throat silenced him.

One terrific effort the Baker Street detective made to throw off his assailant—an effort that made the Dutchman rock, powerful as he was, and great as his advantage was. But the effort failed. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,186.

and Ferrers Locke sank back, at the mercy of the Dutchman.

There was no mercy in the hard, brutal face bent over him. Vanderpeck glared down at his victim, with glinting eyes under his beetling brows.

"My turn now, Mynheer Locke!" he snarled.

Locke did not speak—he could not. Again he attempted to throw off the ruffian, again he failed.

Yet his eyes, upturned, were fixed steadily, without fear, on the murderous face of the Dutchman. Ferrers Locke had faced death too often to flinch from it now.

Vanderpeck grinned down at him. "You know me—the man you placed in irons, the man you robbed of his prize, and handed over to prison! You know me, you dog! Ah! They could not hold me at Aden—I escaped. At Marseilles I waited for you—waited for this!"

And, hushing out the words, the Dutchman compressed his savage grip on the throat of the choking detective.

From the corner of the wardrobe, Billy Bunter looked, his eyes wide-distended behind his spectacles.

Terror chained him to the spot. But as Ferrers Locke, helpless under the muscular ruffian, writhed in the grip of the strangling hands, Bunter suddenly woke to life.

He made a sudden spring from his hiding-place, tore the door open, and yelled:

"Help!"

"Acht!" panted Vanderpeck. Not a suspicion had crossed his mind that anyone was in the room but himself and his victim. Bunter had the door open, and was yelling in the corridor before Vanderpeck fairly realised that the fat junior had been in the room at all.

"Help, help! I say, you fellows! Help!" shrieked Bunter.

Three or four doors opened along the corridor. Harry Wharton & Co. stared out in amazement.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What—"

"Bunter! What—"

"Help, Locke! The Dutchman! Murder! Help!" shrieked Bunter.

"Good heavens!"

Harry Wharton was the first to reach the door. He passed Bunter, and dashed in. Vanderpeck, spitting out Dutch curses, leaped to his feet.

"The Dutchman!" yelled Wharton. "Back up!"

He leaped at the ruffian like a bound at a stag. He would have been dashed aside in a moment; but Bob Cherry was already on the scene, and he sprang at Vanderpeck and grasped him.

Ferrers Locke, panting, choking, struggled to a sitting position. His automatic glimmered in his hand.

Crash! Crash! The muscular Dutchman, exerting his great strength, hurled Wharton and Bob Cherry aside, and they staggered away. He made a fierce leap for the door—where Johnny Bull and Nugent, Hurree Singh and Wun Lung, had already arrived.

The fierce rush of the Dutchman would have carried him through the juniors, hurtling them right and left. But the automatic in Locke's hand was lifted now.

Crack!

There was a yell from Vanderpeck as the bullet smashed through his knee. He pitched headlong to the floor.

Locke dragged himself to his feet. He stooped over the disabled ruffian, and there was a click of handcuffs. Jap

Vanderpeck was a prisoner again; and this time he was not likely to escape.

By this time the whole hotel was alarmed. The corridor was crowded with excited waiters, guests, all sorts and conditions of people. In the midst of the confusion the gendarmes arrived; and Ferrers Locke handed over the prisoner to them, with explanations in fluent French. And in charge of gendarmes, Jan Vanderpeck, groaning and muttering oaths, disappeared from the sight of the Greyfriars juniors.

"I must thank you, my boys, for your prompt aid," said Ferrers Locke, when he was able to speak to the juniors at last; "and you, Bunter, for having given the alarm. But"—he stared hard at the fat junior—"how was it that you came to be in my room so fortunately?"

"I—I—" stammered Bunter.

"Well?"

DON'T KEEP YOUR GOOD STORIES TO YOURSELF! TELL 'EM TO ME AND WIN A POCKET KNIFE

like "Magnet Reader," of 43, European Asylum Lane, Calcutta, India, who has sent in the following amusing joke.



Country Beggar: "Is it true that the streets of London are paved with gold, mate?"

London Beggar (with memories of many terms in prison): "No, nuffink of the kind. They're paved with coppers!"

What about a ribtickler from YOU now?

"I—I was just watching over your safety, you know," said Bunter, blinking. "I hope you don't think I'd go to your room to upset a jug of water over your bed."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Of course, I wouldn't!" said Bunter. "If you find your bed's been soaked you can put it down to the garçons! They're frightfully careless in these French hotels, you know."

Locke stared at him, and then burst into a laugh.

"You utter young donkey!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, really, Mr. Locke—"

"You deserve to have your ears boxed!"

"Oh, I say!"

"Cut off to bed!" said Ferrers Locke. And Bunter cut off, glad to escape with his fat ears unboxed.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Good-bye to Ferrers Locke!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. did not leave Marseilles so soon as they had expected. There was considerable delay over the affair of the Dutchman, but at long last the party took the train for Paris, then for Boulogne—and the Channel boat received them at last. And though all the party agreed that the trip to China had been a great trip, and that they wouldn't have missed it for worlds, they were glad to see the white cliffs of old England rising into view again. They clustered on the deck and watched the chalk gleaming in the sun as the steamer drew nearer and nearer.

"Jolly old country!" said Bob Cherry. "You can't beat it. Tomorrow, my beloved 'earsers, we'll be back at Greyfriars."

"Hurrah!"

"And I hope you won't forget all I've done for you!" said Billy Bunter severely.

"No, you mustn't forget Bunter!" said Bob. "The first thing I'm going to do when we get into Greyfriars is to kick Bunter along the Remove passage. I think he deserves it—after all he's done for us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Deast!"

"We'll all do the same!" said Johnny Bull heartily.

"The samofulness will be terrific!"

"I don't expect gratitude!" said Bunter. "But the least you can do, when we get into Greyfriars, is to stand me a study spread. That's the very least you can do, in my opinion."

"Me standee feed!" said Wun Lung.

"Oh, good!"

"Spooce likes nicey sole!" added the Chinese junior.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter snorted.

At Folkestone the Greyfriars juniors parted with Ferrers Locke, with mutual regret. The famous detective saw them off in their train, and shook hands all round at the carriage door. As the door closed Billy Bunter leaned from the window.

"I say, Mr. Locke!"

Ferrers Locke had stepped back; but he stepped forward again. The train was beginning to move.

"Yes?" he asked. "What is it, Bunter?"

"I forgot to mention it, but—"

"You, yes. Be quick, the train's going!"

"I'm expecting a postal order."

"What?"

"And if you lend me the ten-bob I'll let you have the postal order as soon as it arrives."

The train rushed on, leaving Ferrers Locke staring. Billy Bunter granted, and sat down.

"I say, you fellows! Which of you is going to lend me ten-bob and take my postal order when it comes?"

"The whicfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

And other answer there was none!

THE END.

(There'll be another topping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's **RUMPER ENLARGED NUMBER** of the **MAGNET**, entitled: "**PROUT'S LOVELY BLACK EYE!**" It's brimful of exciting situations, chums, and every "**Magnetite**" should make a point of ordering his copy **EARLY!**)

UP, the ROVERS!



A Bitter Disaster!

A SEARING pain, as though the knife had got home in his leg, made Jimmy stagger away. A heavy boot, ferociously used, had stabbed the base of his shin bone, and his whole right leg was useless. Tottering, he collapsed helplessly to the grass. Another ungovernable kick crashed into his ribs, knocking the breath from his body at a stroke, and then, in a flash, the masked man spun on his heel and was away into the gloom, the sound of his drumming footsteps growing fainter and fainter until they died away completely.

Hail-blind with pain Jimmy scrambled to his feet. Pursuit was hopeless, he could barely walk. As in a nightmare, he saw great forks of flame dancing convulsively all over the roof of the stand, amid fountains of brilliant sparks and great, thick clouds of oily smoke.

Lights had sprung up in the house behind him. He could hear old Jeff's voice calling him loudly. Dimly to his ears came other sounds, too—men's voices shouting somewhere beyond the football ground, and suddenly drowning them all, came the blood-stirring clamour of fire bells, growing louder as the Railton brigade rushed towards the scene.

Jimmy waited no longer. Hobbling as fast as he could go, he lurched through the trees to the garden gate, flung it open, and stepped on to the sinder-path of the Rovers' ground. One glance upwards brought a groan of dismay to his lips. The great stand, stretching all along the touchline, was ablaze from end to end, its roof flaring like a torch.

A patter of hot ashes from above and a gust of heavy smoke wreathing his head, told him that he was in danger; so, muffling his face in his jacket, he ducked and staggered round the end of the building on to the playing-patch itself. There again the sight fetched him to a sharp halt.

(Opening Chapters retold on page 26.)

"Someone must have busted the main gates open," he thought dizzily; for already the ground was full of firemen, in orderly confusion, some dragging in the hoses, others searching for the water-hydrants set around the sinder-path.

At their heels, swarming in despite the police who tried to stay them, came the folk of Railton, dodging in and shouting as they got a full view of the fire—already the biggest the town had ever known.

Its fury, and the speed at which the blaze had spread over the stand, was astounding. Orange flames, red flames—with an ominous blue glare beneath them—lit the sky for miles. With his

Meet Jimmy Brennan, the lad with a big heart and goal-scoring shooting-boots. Meet Jimmy, the unstoppable!

head in a whirl, Jimmy tottered to the centre of the ground, where eager eyes saw him, and in a moment he was surrounded.

Voices buzzed and shouted in his ear. Hands tried to grip him. But shaking them off, he forced his way through the press until he came to the firemen, where the vigorous brigade captain stood directing operations.

"Can you save it?" he choked.

The captain whirled round, startled by the husky voice at his shoulder. His eyes widened at sight of Jimmy's bruised and haggard face, smeared with blood from the masked man's blows.

"Ye gods, Mr. Brennan! What—"

Jimmy grasped him desperately.

"I'm all right, Captain Sharpe. But can you save the stand?" he begged.

The fire chief's face hardened as he

wheeled the youngster round and pointed upwards.

"No, sir; we can't. That's no ordinary fire; look at those blue flames! That's spirit alight in there! It's a clear case of arson!"

Jimmy nodded dumbly. Staring round, he saw that the crowd had been forced back by a wall of blue police uniforms. Even as he looked the cordon parted, and through the opening strode Inspector Blake, followed by Philip Brennan and Tony, their faces flushed and excited.

"Jimmy! What the blazes—"

Inspector Blake's curt voice cut in swiftly. He had caught Captain Sharpe's stern words, and his eyes raked the fire chief keenly.

"What's that, captain? Arson?"

Sharpe set his lips.

"Yes, inspector. Petrol, I reckon; but can't tell for certain yet."

The inspector's notebook came out. Then he, too, checked as he saw Jimmy's face.

"Hallo! What's happened, Jimmy?"

Jimmy panted.

"It—it's arson all right, inspector!" he cried. "I was in my garden when I heard an explosion and saw the stand break into flames. Then a man came racing through our gate. I tackled him. But—he got away."

"Phew! You tackled him? Where?"

The questions were like bullets.

"I told you—back in my garden. Under the trees. He used a knife on me; and it may be there—now!"

Philip Brennan plunged forward.

"By Heaven, Jimmy, you might have been killed! Come on; let's search the garden!"

The inspector's arm, flashing out, checked him as he turned away.

"Wait here, sir, please. This is a police matter now. Sergeant, take four men and search Mr. Brennan's ground thoroughly!"

"Right, sir!"

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The man made off, and the little group, Tony with his arm round Jimmy's shoulder, stood silently watching the inferno before them; listening with sinking hearts to the roar of the flames and the futile hissing of the hose-jets.

Even to Jimmy's eyes it was obvious that the great stand was completely doomed. One by one the big supports were cracking and falling in, segments of the roof collapsing with them, to fall, amid spurts of flame and sparks, into the furnace below. In a few more minutes the fire chief had given up hopes, and his men were busy drenching the rest of the seats all round the ground lest they, too, caught fire from flying fragments that whirled into the glowing sky.

It was a terrible spectacle. Gradually the brickwork crumbled until the steel girders showed through, fiercely hot; the whole pile sagged lower and lower into one great mass of embers.

Time went by—an eternity it seemed. By its very intensity the fire was burning itself out, and at last the hoses were brought back to the stand, able to make headway now and quench the feeble flames. Little by little the water gained the upper hand; black, sullen masses of steaming debris began to appear where previously only fire had reigned.

Sitting on the turf to rest his damaged leg, with his uncle and cousin still beside him, Jimmy watched until the last smoulder had been quenched. In a dim sort of way he was trying to figure out just what this disaster meant to him. One thing stood out apart from all else; his hopes of decent "gates" for the season were utterly ruined now, even if he could afford to rebuild the stand quickly—which he realised poignantly that he could not! Nearly ten thousand seats had gone up in smoke, a quarter of the ground's capacity. And the financial loss would be terrible.

All sorts of wild ideas flashed through his mind. Insurance? He did not know for how much the stand was insured, nor—and he bit his lip—if the company would "pay up" in a glaring case of arson till everything was cleared.

To borrow the money was an absolute impossibility. Money was not plentiful in Railton, anyway, and the prospects of the Rovers were not bright enough to attract any local financier.

A little groan must have been wrung from him, for Tony's grip on his shoulder tightened.

"Buck up, old son!" he whispered. "Look! Here comes the sergeant and his men. Perhaps they've found something!"

They had. Jimmy's jaw hardened as he saw, in the sergeant's hand, the long livid knife with which the masked man had attacked him. That was something, at least.

There was a short, sharp conversation between the sergeant and his superior—evidently a brief report—and the knife changed hands, the inspector tucking it beneath his tunic, although Philip Brennan stepped forward eagerly to examine the weapon.

The police official turned his head to where Jimmy sat and came quickly across, picking his way over the busy hoses.

"I shouldn't wait any longer, Jimmy," he said kindly; "you're nearly

all in, anyway. Captain Sharpe tells me he's got the fire in hand now, and it'll be dead before morning. Also"—he touched his uniform—"I've something here that may prove useful as a clue. I'll see you to-morrow. Got along home now!"

There was sense in his words, also a certain ring of command. Already his men were clearing the ground of onlookers. It was plain he wanted to quieten things down.

Thanking him, Jimmy struggled up and, with Tony's aid, limped through the circle of police. As soon as he was outside, however, he was surrounded by anxious friends. The Rovers were there in force, George Harvey at their head; Bill Nye, Payton, even the curly Thomas had left his lodgings and hurried along to see the fire. The old trainer gripped the lad at once and studied him closely.

"My gosh, boy, but you're a wreck! Is it a fact that ye collared the fellow who did—that?" He jerked his head towards the ruined stand.

"Yes, Bill. I'm all right, though."

"All right, are you?" growled big George Harvey. "I'd like to get my mitts on the scoundrel for five minutes, long knife or not! Eh, lads?"

"Ay!" A deep growl broke from the Rovers, and they urged forward.

"Is there anything we can do, sir?"

Jimmy gulped, shaking his head. The loyalty and sympathy in the eager faces round him made him almost choke.

"No, thanks. I'll—get home!"

He turned away. But Harvey's voice boomed out loudly, and the centre-half swung round with his arm raised high.

"There's one thing we can do, though!" he cried. "Come on, chaps: three cheers for the boss! And Railton's best forward!"

Over and above the clatter and confusion the deep hurrahs roared out lustily.

Jimmy stopped, his face scarlet. It was the tonic he needed; he realised that the cheers were meant, that his men were behind him, as Bill Nye had said they were. His shoulders stiffened, and something like his old cheery grin appeared as he looked at them—his team.

"Thanks—all of you!" he stammered. "We—we're not licked yet, are we, chaps?"

A fresh burst of cheers, as he limped away towards the fire, answered him. The Rovers were not licked yet. They told him so with the full power of their lungs!

But the wreckage of the main stand smouldered still.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD.

Determined to stop the rot that has set in, James Brennan, the genial but wonderful owner of the Railton Rovers F.C., decides to pay a huge transfer fee for an experienced centre-forward to put new life into his team. The deal fails to materialise, however, for Brennan is robbed of his savings by means of a forged cheque and then attacked by some unknown assailant who deals him a blow to the heart which proves fatal. Left without a penny to carry on, Jimmy is pondering over the situation in his room overlooking the football ground when the blackness of the night outside is suddenly lit up by a crimson tongue of flame spouting high above the Rovers' main stand. Groping with a masked figure speeding away from the scene of the fire, Jimmy does his best to overpower him.

(Now read on.)

A Stranger Comes to Railton.

"COME along, Rovers!"

"'Nother one, lad!"

The Railton home-crowd, eager for one more thrill in the last minutes of an exciting game, let drive a hearty roar as Payton, the outside-right, trapped a pretty pass from his half-back, and went flying downfield a foot inside the touchline, with the other forwards spreading swiftly ahead in position.

The midweek match against Oldchester Wanderers was drawing to a close, with the Rovers sitting on a comfortable 3-1 lead; and the ground, or as much of it as was left, was filled with chuckling supporters. Partly for the game, and partly to cheer Young Jimmy, playing magnificently among the forwards, Railton had turned out in force.

Already vague reports of the disasters the young footballer-owner had suffered recently were spreading through the town, and although, so far, the police had failed to lay hands on the mysterious masked man who had fired the main stand three days ago, the full story of the terrible fire had shaken Railton severely. Jimmy was as popular as his father had been before him with the townsfolk, and it was a safe bet that had the masked man been arrested in the open streets of Railton the police would have had a tough time getting him safely through the infuriated throng.

Of the main stand only a few skeleton girders and the concrete banking remained. The fire was out, but the ruins were unsafe, and a few bold spirits who had perched themselves among the debris for a better view of the game, had been promptly hauled off by the police. Like a huge dead monster all down the left touchline the stand lay black and deserted.

Few of the onlookers had eyes for it at the moment, however. They were watching the black-and-white jerseys swaying and weaving through the Oldchester defence, as Payton touched the ball to Jimmy and the lad went wriggling inwards to open up a gap for Thomas' finishing shot.

It had been a great game, fast and thrilling. A loyal, devouring spirit seemed to have set the Rovers alight. Headed by George Harvey, the defence had formed itself into a brick wall, before which the green Oldchester shirts fell back like waves; while the young forward line, playing with machine-like smoothness, had run the visiting halves off their legs.

Jimmy's shin, although still sore, had yielded to Bill Nye's skilful treatment, and throughout the game he had swept towards the Oldchester goal like a flame, chalking up two goals with shots that brought down the house. Even Thomas, spurred by team-spirit—and a few pointed remarks from old Bill Nye—had pulled his weight nobly, well supported by the dashing, hard-working youngsters on either side.

Now, with Jimmy in full cry, another goal seemed certain. A tired Oldchester man, tackling him grimly, was left standing by a dazzling swerve, another failed to intercept him by yards. Gathering himself together, Jimmy stormed goalwards without a glance to right or left. The crowd yelled:

"That's it—go yourself, Jimmy! Hat-trick, lad!"

The thunder of the cheer roared into Jimmy's ears. But he kept his head. Hat-tricks mattered nothing to him; it was Thomas, his only decent centre-forward, he had to feed and encourage.

Out of the corner of his eye the young inside-right saw the white posts temptingly near, with the scarlet-jerseyed keeper watching him anxiously. An Oldchester back bobbed up at his shoulder, and his partner swept desperately into the picture, blocking the path.

That was all the scheming youngster wanted. He had bluffed the defence, drawing it around him. One hasty glance he gave to see that Thomas was "up," and then with dainty precision he stabbed the ball past the charging back, a few yards in front of the Railton marksman.

At top speed Thomas raced for the leather, his flashing boot hitting it solidly. A thud, a lightning brown streak, and the glimpse of a despairing red arm; then the ball hissed gloriously into the corner of the net—a perfect goal!

"Goal! Goal!"

Again and again the home supporters voiced their delight. There was a confident grin on the sulky centre-forward's face, and more than a touch of swagger in his walk as he turned to shake Jimmy's hand.

"That's the way to finish 'em off!" he chuckled. And the young owner smiled, well content.

A minute later the final whistle went. Slowly the teams streamed off the

out to me!" a cool voice snapped. "Not jaw in public. Good-day!"

Leaving the flustered constable red and speechless, the young man turned and strolled away. His reedy figure was swallowed up in the busy street.

Meanwhile, Jimmy, hands in pockets, was hurrying across the now-deserted football-ground to the little gate behind the stand that led to the Firs. A pinched, bleak expression clouded his face for a moment as he looked at the churched and blackened mass before him, but he turned his eyes away resolutely and ran on without another glance. Old Jeff's voice greeted him when he pattered into the house.

"Visitor for you, Master Jimmy. Mr. Thurgood!"

Jimmy stopped at once, frowning. In the old days the manager of the Railton Bank had been a frequent guest at the Firs; but now—

"More trouble, I suppose, Jeff," said Jimmy, with a shrug. "I'll see him at once!"

Still in his football kit, he strode across the hall to the old-fashioned drawing-room where Charles Thurgood rose to meet him with his usual hearty beam.

"Hallo, old chap!"

"Afternoon, Mr. Thurgood. Been waiting long?"

"No, lad. Just popped in after the game. Wanted to see you—alone!"

In spite of the smile on his jovial face, Jimmy thought he detected a faint awkwardness in the bank manager's manner, and his suspicion that

gratefully. "It would be. You know how I stand about money. I'm broke and so are the Rovers. We might have struggled on, but now the stand has been burnt—" he shrugged. "We're right up against it!"

"Just so. Now, what's happening about the stand, old man?"

"Well, I've claimed the insurance money!" replied Jimmy slowly. "And, as a matter of fact, I'm waiting to hear something now. The stand was insured with a Manchester firm and in view of the circumstances, Mr. Sylvester has gone to see them himself, specially. He—he offered to go; and promised to phone me as soon as he got back to Railton. That's why I've just hurried back from the match!"

"Ah! And what is Sylvester's opinion of the case?" asked Thurgood keenly. His eyes narrowed as a bleak smile crossed the youngster's face.

"Oh—comforting as usual!" growled Jimmy. "He says it's a mysterious case of arson and I haven't an earthly of getting the cash until the police have caught the scum who did it, anyway. He—he's a cheery sort of bloke is Mr. Sylvester—I don't think!"

A fleeting smile on the bank manager's face showed that he was inclined to agree, but didn't like to say so. Instead, he pressed Jimmy's knee warmly.

"Well, well. Sylvester's a funny chap. But honestly, Jimmy, I'm afraid he's right. By the time you get your cash you'll have lost best part of the season's gate-money for the stand. Tell me—he bent closer—"what will it cost to put it right, d'you know?"

Special ENLARGED NUMBER of the MAGNET NEXT WEEK!

pitch, filing through the cheering Railtonians. Temporary dressing-rooms had been fixed up in the George Hotel, a big hostelry just outside the ground; but as soon as the men were in their baths, and he had shaken hands with the Oldchester skipper, Jimmy slipped an overcoat over his footer gear and trotted away quickly to change in his own house.

Coming out of the hotel at the double, several hero-worshipping schoolboys hanging about the courtyard for that purpose, spotted him and raised a cheer. He turned to wave a smiling hand, and in doing so, promptly bumped into the back of another youngster who stood talking to a stalwart man in blue.

The force of the impact was not very great. But it was sufficient to send the youngster reeling. He was a slim, poorly-dressed lad of middle height, with a thin, pale face, out of which two dark eyes blinked ruefully as the young footballer threw out a powerful arm and smiled his apologies.

"Awful sorry, old son! Hurt?"

"N-no, thanks!"

Jimmy nodded and hurried on forgetting the incident immediately. But the weedy stranger turned and looked after him thoughtfully. A smile creased the corners of his mouth.

"That him?" he asked softly.

The policeman lifted his chin importantly.

"That's him, sir!" he whispered. Then confidentially. "Has Scotland Ya—"

A blank stare, brief but very effective, cut him short and he found himself staring into a stern face that had suddenly grown ten years older.

"Your orders were to point that boy

fresh trouble was in the wind grew stronger. Forcing a grin, he nodded his visitor to a chair and sat down facing him.

"I see!" he answered politely. "What can I do for you, sir?"

Thurgood started to speak, but balked, his immaculate finger-nails seeming to claim his attention for a while.

Jimmy waited, oddly tense.

"We'll!" his visitor said at last. "It's more a case of—what can I do for you, Jimmy?"

Thrown off his keel by a sharp wave of relief, Jimmy stared.

"Do for me?" he echoed. "Then it isn't more trouble. I mean—what d'you mean, sir?"

With an effort Thurgood threw off his obvious embarrassment and leaned forward with a smile.

"Well, it's like this, Jimmy!" he said earnestly. "Somehow I can't help feeling that I'm to blame for all the mess you're in. Yes, I am!" he jerked as Jimmy started to protest. "I was taken in by the—the fellow who—looked like you as though I was a raw junior clerk. And afterwards, instead of trying to settle the matter quietly, I've blurted everything out—and you're in the soup. That's a plain hint, boy!"

"I know!" Jimmy's voice was bitter. "It's not your fault, though. You think I'm square, at least—but other's don't!"

"Well, we won't discuss that!" soothed Thurgood. "However, I feel it's my fault. Your dad was a pretty good friend to me for years; and—well, I've come alone to see if any help or advice I can give his son will be useful. You see?"

"Why, thanks!" murmured Jimmy

"About six thousand!" sighed Jimmy. "I saw the contractor yesterday. As far as we can tell the concrete banking's O.K., but the walls and roof will have to be rebuilt, and, of course, every single seat was destroyed!"

"No chance of borrowing the cash?"

"Not a hope!"

"Well, then, listen!" And Thurgood held up an eager hand. "I can help you; but don't get offended at what I'm going to say. Why don't you sell this house?"

Thurgood's Astounding Offer!

"WHA-AT!" Jimmy, thunder-struck, rose slowly from his chair as one who cannot believe his ears. "Sell the

the Firs?"

"Sure. Why not? I've thought it over, and it's my best advice, Jimmy. What does a youngster like you want with a thundering great mansion and huge grounds, if you can sell it and save the Rovers—as you want to? See my point?"

Jimmy did see it—with overwhelming force. It was certainly a way out. But sell the family place! Gosh!

His mind fell into a whirl of conflicting thoughts. To sell the Firs had never occurred to him in his wildest plans; yet—with no other prospect of raising money in sight—it would put the Rovers on their feet again. But—rats, he couldn't do it!

Loyalty to the club, and love of the beautiful house he had lived in all his life, fought a terrific battle inside him during the next few minutes. He stared at Charles Thurgood, who was watching him with a curious expression on his

pink face and a certain hard gleam in his smiling eyes.

"But it's such a big place!" stammered the lad at last. "Who'd buy it?"

"I would!" was the prompt and startling reply.

Jimmy's face flushed angrily. He thought he understood.

"You!" he cried. "Look here, Mr. Thurgood, this isn't charity—or something, is it?"

At the vigorous words the bank manager looked slightly upset, but his genial smile soon returned.

"No, my son, it isn't. And to show you it's not, I'm not going to offer more than five thousand for the place. Can't afford more. But I'll arrange a thousand-pound loan at the bank for you, if you like, payable within two years at the usual interest, and there's your six thousand pounds right away. How's that for help?"

Jimmy's eyes were troubled.

"But you don't want such a big house, either, Mr. Thurgood!" he cried.

"Why not?" shrugged the bank manager. "I'm a fairly prosperous man in Railton now, Jimmy—and I've always admired this house. I'll take it as it stands, with your two servants, if you like, and give 'em a decent home!"

A hungry gleam appeared in Jimmy's eyes again, but it died swiftly as he jumped to his feet.

"Anyway, lad, there's the offer. I feel it's up to me to do you a good turn, and by buying this house I can do myself one at the same time. Fair division, eh? Ha, ha!"

Head bowed in thought, Jimmy paced the room with long strides. It was a tempting offer—six thousand pounds almost ready in his hand. He could rebuild the stand quickly and still make good on the season. But—sell the Firs. He turned to face the bank manager at last.

"It's a great offer!" he said warmly. "And you're a sport, Mr. Thurgood, because it's not through your fault that I'm broke. Let me think it over!"

"Why, of course, Jimmy!" answered Thurgood heartily. "Think it over and let me know. You'll find I'm right. You want some money; I should like this house. It'll be a wrench for you, I know, but—"

There came a knock at the door and Jeff looked in.

"Telephone, Master Jimmy!"

"Oh, right, Jeff!" Jimmy's heart gave a wild leap. This would be Henry Sylvester at last—with news from the insurance company. Perhaps they had recognized the claim forthwith, and there would be no need to sell the house! Excusing himself to Thurgood, he fairly bolted to his father's study and grabbed the instrument.

"Jimmy Brennan speaking. That you, Mr. Sylvester?"

"It is. And I'm afraid I do not bring good news, James!" The solicitor's voice was as cold and grave as ever, and the boy's hopes sagged at once.

"You mean—there's nothing doing?" he muttered dully.

"The company refuse to pay until the criminal who caused the fire has been caught!" came the reply. "And they are within their rights, I fear. I am somewhat fatigued by my long journey, James, but if you will call and see me later this evening, I will give you the full details!"

"Oh, but hold on!" ordered Jimmy roughly. "That's not good enough. I can't help it if some dirty crook fired my property, can I? They don't think I did it, do they? Same as some people think I forged dad's cheque!" he finished with bitter emphasis.

The telephone was silent for a while. Then:

"Please don't be absurd. The company have every right to withhold payment until everything is settled. Come and see me later!"

"But—but wait!" snorted Jimmy again. "I suppose this means I must wait months for my money, what?"

"Until the criminal is caught!" repeated Sylvester stonily. "Good-bye!"

Click! He rang off sharply. Jimmy's big fist tightened round the instrument until his knuckles showed white, and a look of icy determination chilled his grey eyes. Right—this was the last straw. To blazes with Sylvester and the insurance company, too. It was bad enough keeping his end up against mysterious enemies, who were striking at him right and left, without watching Railton Rovers—his father's club and his own—sink in the mud while lawyers and corporations fooled about with red tape.

Slamming down the phone, Jimmy dived through the door and burst into the drawing-room in a white heat.

"Mr. Thurgood!" he snapped. "You've offered me five thousand pounds for this house, and you'll lend me another thousand from the bank. Is that still on?"

Flustered by the stormy entrance and the lad's flushed face, the bank manager nodded quickly.

"Of course, Jimmy. What—"

"Right!" Jimmy shoved out his hand. "You're on! It's a choice between the Rovers or this house! Fight or bust! And the house loses! I'll accept your offer—now!"

(Jimmy Brennan's determined to put the Rovers on their feet again. But has he made a wise move in parting with the Firs? Look out for another ripping instalment of this gripping serial next week, boys.)



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